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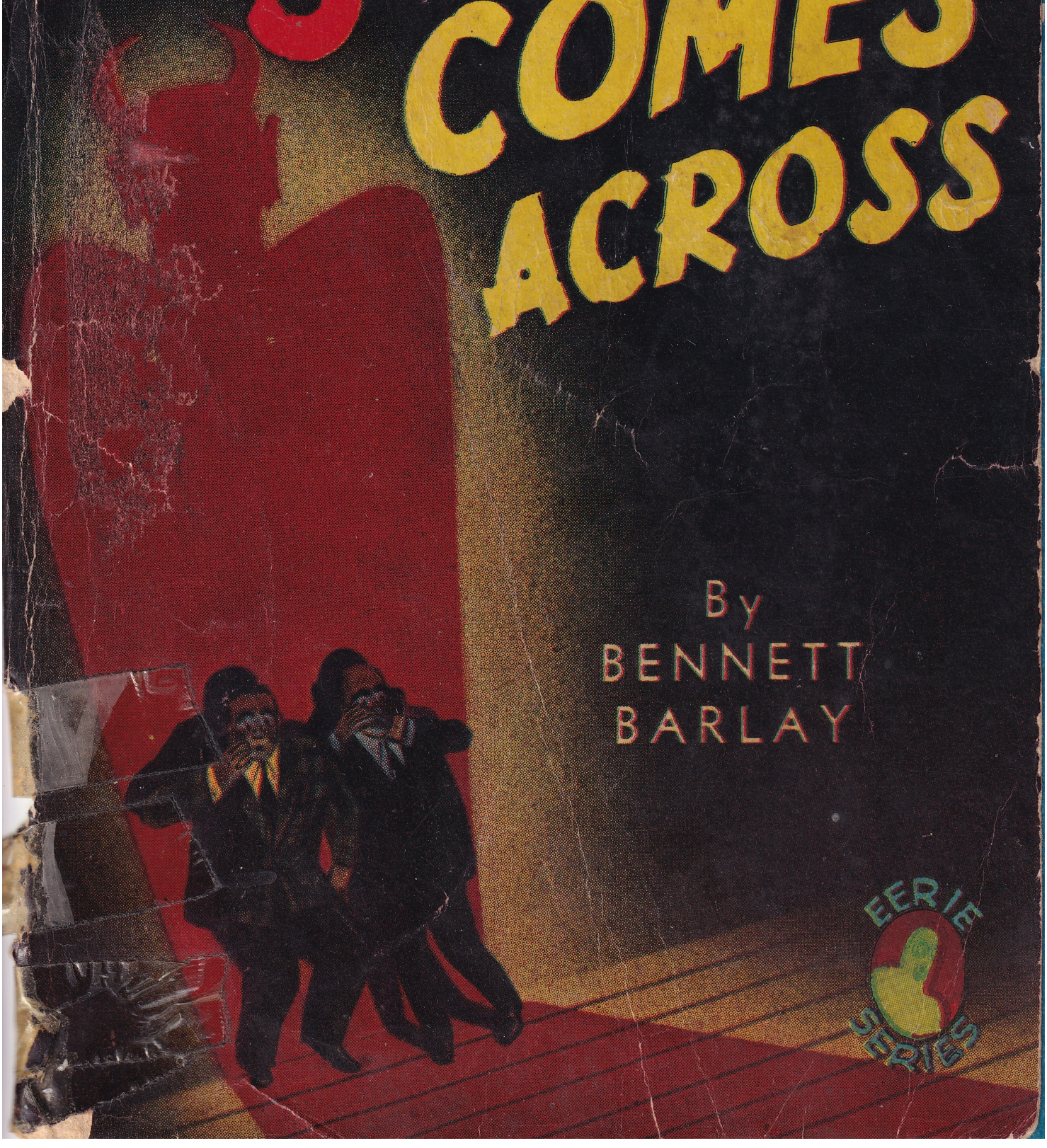
SATAN COMES ACROSS

By BENNETT BARLAY



EERIE SERIES

SATAN COMES ACROSS

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SATAN COMES ACROSS

By BENNETT BARLAY

A Full-Length Mystery

An Publication

MATHEW POLAK

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CHAPTER ONE

THE MODERN SATAN

LARRY DONALD WAS GOING TO NEW YORK. HE HAD SPENT THE last six months holed up on his small farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, finishing a novel. The last page had been typed and retyped, and he was delivering it to his agent in New York. After that, he would try to do something to dispel the boredom of having spent six months with no one to talk to but himself. He would try to get rid of that great restlessness that made him tramp the accelerator to the floor, shooting his big roadster around curves with protesting screeches from the tires.

The roadster was open. The wind whipped over his head as he sped down the highway. It was late autumn and the road was lined with trees and bushes dressed in their seasonal finery. Green, scarlet and gold, splashed with a lavish hand over the hillsides of New Jersey, vied with the flashing roadster. Larry threw back his head and laughed as the crisp fall wind bit into his nostrils, roughed his hair. He was like a man released from prison.

At twenty-eight, Larry Donald looked more like the All-American football player he had been than the successful novelist he was. Football was responsible for the trick knee that kept him out of the army. Wavy blond hair ruffled about his head, white teeth flashed in a face that had caused more than one girl to sigh. Because his good looks never failed to draw attention, his publishers were always trying to give him literary teas. Usually, everyone showed up but Larry.

He claimed he wrote because he was bored, which may have been partially true. Certainly he was filled with a turbulent energy that never gave him a moment's ease. His novels were crammed with the action which he had been unable to find since leaving college. For a while, he had played professional football. But something had gone out of the sport for him.

There was no longer any thrill in the roar of the crowd. In college he had played for the thrill of the sport. The thrill was still there but the moment he received his check, Larry suffered a let-down. Somehow, he felt cheated. He had played for money, not for the excitement of the sport. He soon quit. Now, those books of his, and the hurtling roadster, were the only outlets for the surging vitality dammed up within him.

The roadster was nearing route 25, which would carry it over the Jersey Skyway into the snail-paced flood of traffic converging on New York City, when something happened to mar the sylvan beauty of the countryside. For a moment, Larry stared ahead to the point where a small woodland closed in on the road. Instinctively, his eyes saw a break in the natural symmetry. But he could not understand what it was that made him sense something was wrong.

He stared intently as his car drew nearer. The green shrubbery was shaking violently. A moment later, a pair of hands reached through it and a man stumbled out. He staggered through the brush, tearing his way through, wavered at the edge of the macadam roadway, then crumpled to the road directly in the path of the roadster.

Tires screeched angrily, and small pebbles scattered with a flurry, as Larry threw his whole weight on the brakes. The car skidded to a stop within a foot of the man's body. Larry jumped out and ran swiftly to the fallen man.

He was a young man, about Larry's age, but his face was pinched with pain. His clothes were ragged and torn as though he had been running through the thick underbrush. There was a great splotch of red on his white shirt front. His eyes were closed. He was breathing heavily, his mouth open. As Larry bent over him, the man's eyes fluttered open. Without wasting words, Larry started to pick him up.

"No—" the man gasped. He raised one hand feebly and tried to push Larry away.

"Hell!" Larry exclaimed. "You're hurt! Take it easy while I put you in my car. I'll have you in a hospital in no time."

"No," the man whispered, rolling his head from side to side.

"Too late." His voice was scarcely louder than a whisper. "I'll be dead in another minute."

Larry stared silently. It was true. He could see that the man was dying. He could never get him to a hospital in time. If anything could be done for him, it would have to be done right there in the road, and at once.

Larry reached down and ripped the man's shirt open. The wound in the chest was bleeding profusely. Larry balled the torn shirt and prepared the man's jacket to be used as a bandage. It might stop the flow of blood, at least for a while. Larry placed the shirt against the wound. Then he laid the jacket over it, drawing the sleeves under the man's body and tightening them.

The man kept shaking his head. "No use," he whispered. "No use!" Then he stared at Larry. "You can't save me," the man gasped. "But you can do something more important for me." The man watched the reaction on Larry's face intently. Evidently he was afraid to trust him, and was fighting for time to make up his mind. "Will you—will you deliver something for me?"

Larry nodded. Thoughts flew swiftly through his mind. What kind of a man was this? With his dying breath he could speak of something more important than life itself?

The man fumbled in one pocket and brought out a crumpled envelope. He held it out toward Larry. "Take this—to Earl Pearson—FBI man—in Federal Building, New York. Important . . ." The man sank back on the macadam, his face drained of color. "Remember . . . Earl Pearson . . ." The man's voice trailed off incoherently.

"Sure," Larry said. He took the envelope and stuffed it into his pocket. "I'll deliver it, but—"

The man made a violent effort to speak. He gasped. Then his voice came clear. "Don't talk. Listen! No time—tell Earl to watch radio—short wave—using Russian . . ." The whisper broke off. The man fought for breath. His eyes flickered for a moment then rolled up. He stared blankly at the sky. Larry leaned over closer.

The man was dead.

The sound of running footsteps brought Larry back to his surroundings. He looked up. Three men were running toward him through the fields. The one in front was holding someing in his hand. It looked like a gun. Larry started to go through the dead man's pockets. His wallet would undoubtedly give a clue to his identity. Something whistled past Larry's head. A moment later, he heard the sharp crack of a revolver shot. He glanced back in time to see the man raise his gun again.

He acted with the speed that had made him famous on the gridiron. In a split second, Larry was on his feet. He whirled, half-crouching and twisting from side to side as if he were breaking through tackle. The motor was still running and he gave a swift prayer of thanks as he jumped into the car. He shoved it into gear and bore down on the accelerator. The car leaped forward. Behind him he heard a noise that sounded like the breaking of a stick and his rear-vision mirror vanished, spraying him with glass. A moment later, he rounded a curve, out of sight.

He expected a chase but apparently there was none. He kept the speedometer above seventy for ten solid minutes. Then he pulled to the side of the road and stopped. Quickly, he raised the top of his roadster. If the three men did give chase, they would be intent on catching up to an open roadster. There was little likelihood that they would notice him. He started the car and drove on at a moderate speed. As he turned into route 25, a big black sedan, with muddied New York plates shot past him, lurched as it almost struck an oncoming Ford then straightened out for New York. Instinctively, Larry stepped on the gas and tried to catch up to the car. There were two men in it, but they did not give so much as a glance in his direction.

Larry was surprised to realize that he had not had a good look at the men who had shot at him. The whole thing happened so quickly, he had not noticed anything about them that would help him identify them. He wasn't sure that the

two men in the car were the killers. There had been three men back where the dead man was lying. Perhaps the third one remained to search the body.

He stepped on the gas and tried to catch up to the black sedan. The license number, if he could read it, might help. Even if the men in it were not the killers, they could not help but see the body in the road. He might need them as witnesses. But the sedan was too fast for him. He drew closer to it, but not close enough to read the numbers on the plates. Just before they hit the heavy traffic, he was able to make out the first numbers. It was 3K-7. The rest was covered with mud. A moment later, the sedan wove in and out of the slow-moving cars and disappeared.

●

Three men sat in the private office of a suite in the Federal Building in New York. In appearance, these men had nothing in common. Yet all three were united by a single purpose. They had a hatred of crime.

"There's very little we can do at present," Earl Pearson was saying. "We can guard all the spots and hope we can catch him in the act. That is, unless Tucker gets some information that will give us a lead on his identity." The FBI man was short and stocky, with light brown hair and grayish-blue eyes. He looked more like a successful young lawyer than a G-man. He sat at his desk and fingered a letter opener thoughtfully.

"What was the last report from Tucker? Did he have a lead?" The second man of the trio was sitting in an easy chair near the door. He had come in but a moment before and immediately dropped into his seat. His long legs were stretched out lazily half-way across the doorway. Tall, slender, gray-haired and impeccably dressed, he wore an eternal expression of surprise on his ascetic face. He was Captain Gerald Sutton of the British Intelligence Service, assigned by his government to work with the FBI in apprehending foreign spies in the U. S.

Pearson nodded his head toward Captain Sutton.

"Yes, Tucker had a definite lead. But I don't know what it is.

I expected a report from him today, but it hasn't come through."

"I'm not so sure that Tucker will have much to report," remarked Jon Bell, crack Broadway columnist for the *New York Tattler,* and a close friend of Pearson. He stood up and began to pace the floor nervously. "I'll bet that it will take a good deal more than a watch-dog to catch this chap!" Bell was a small, slender man with a thin, sharp face, black hair and snapping black eyes. He was full of a nervous, flowing energy. He smoked cigarette after cigarette, always moving. His eyes shifted constantly, now lighting here, now there, never missing a single thing. Pearson found him a useful fount of information about people. And Bell's interest in criminology and his keen mind never failed to help the Federal man through some of his toughest problems.

"We're going about it in the wrong way," Bell went on. "Watchdog methods won't work this time. I tell you this man knows all the usual tricks of the police force and lays his plans accordingly! He knows just how you are going to work—and that is his trump card!"

Before the conversation could continue, the door opened and another man stuck his head in. He was Jeffry Lane, a recent graduate of the Police Academy, and Pearson's assistant.

"There's a young fellow insists on seeing you, chief," Lane said, looking at Pearson. "Says he has a message for you and won't give it to anyone else."

"Another publicity seeker," Captain Sutton drawled. "I don't see why you chaps don't set up a department to take care of all these would-be detectives."

"The way you did at Scotland Yard?" Jon Bell asked, smiling.

"Precisely," Captain Sutton replied. "Saves us a good deal of time. And, of course, we don't have to be meeting all these beastly idiots all the time. Really, fine idea, that department."

Pearson paid no attention to the talk. His brows creased in a puzzled way. "What you seem to miss here," he said, "is that this young man wants to see me."

"How did he know you were here?" Bell asked. "I thought it was all hush-hush? No one knows that you've set up headquarters in New York—"

"By jove, that's right!" Captain Sutton exclaimed. But his manner was not as excited as his words. If anything, he stretched his legs out even further across the room.

"What did he say his name was?" Pearson asked Lane.

"Larry Donald."

"Okay" Pearson replied. "Send him in. He might be a crackpot who just happened to pick on my name. But it won't hurt to see him anyway."

A moment later Lane ushered Larry into the office. As he stepped in, he tripped over Captain Sutton's legs. Both Bell and Sutton reached out quickly and steadied Larry.

"Sorry, old chap," Captain Sutton said. "My legs always seem to be getting in the way."

"Quite all right," Larry replied. He looked at the three men in the room. "Which one is Mr. Pearson?" he asked.

"I'm Pearson," the FBI man said. "What can I do for you?"

"I have a letter for you as well as a verbal message," Larry began, "but I believe it's rather private. The man who gave it to me thought it rather important . . ." He looked questioningly at the other two men.

"They're all right," Pearson said curtly. "Where did you get this message, Mr. Donald?"

"I was driving into town from my place in Pennsylvania when, on route 11 just before it runs into 25, a man popped out into the road right in front of my car and collapsed. He was badly wounded through the chest. But when I tried to get him into my car and drive him to a hospital, he refused to let me. He knew that he was dying and nothing could save him. Instead, he gave me an envelope to be delivered to you and started to tell me something but before his message was completed, he died. I might have still tried to bring the body in or at least find some identification but three men came running up. One of them had a gun and took a couple of shots at me as I jumped into my car."

"And this man told you to come to me?" Pearson was tense now. His eyes never left Larry's face. He studied every change of expression on Larry's face.

"Yes," Larry replied. "He told me to see Earl Pearson at the Federal Building."

Pearson and Bell exchanged knowing looks. "Describe this man who gave you the message," Jon Bell put in, leaning forward expectantly.

"Well," Larry said, "he was about the build of Mr. Pearson here, I should guess. Dressed in what had been a gray suit. Shaggy, sandy hair. I think I remember a scar over his left eyebrow. But I'm not quite sure about that. He was about my age . . ."

"The scar was over the right eyebrow," Pearson interrupted him. "It must have been Tucker." Pearson pressed a buzzer on his table.

The door opened and Lane stepped in. "Want me, chief?"

"Yes. Send a call out to the Jersey police to look for Tucker's body. His picture and description is in the file."

"Did they get him, chief?" Lane asked, his face hardening.

"It seems so from what Mr. Donald just told us. Get going, Jeff."

"Right!" Lane closed the door behind him.

The three men stared at Larry in silence. Finally Pearson reached out his hand. "Let me have that envelope, Mr. Donald."

"Sure." Larry reached into his pocket. "I have it right here—" He broke off in dismay as his hand reached his pocket—and found it empty. He began a rather frantic search through all his pockets. They were empty.

"Well?" Pearson asked.

"That's funny . . . it seems to be gone. The envelope—I'm sure I had it in my pocket," Larry stammered weakly. "It's gone and I don't see how that can be. It was there when I got out of my car downstairs. I felt it . . ." He stopped and stared around at the men. Their faces were cold, suspicious.

Earl Pearson leaned across the desk, his eyes glinting

angrily. "What is your full name, Mr. Donald?" he asked.

"Larry Donald. I—"

"You have proof of your identity?"

"Of course! I—hell's bells, you don't think I stole the damn letter, do you?" His face flushed slightly. "Why would I want to come to see you then?"

"You must admit, Mr. Donald, that it looks more than a little queer," Pearson replied. "We are dealing with Satan and can afford to take no chances!"

Larry stared at Pearson. In turn, he looked at the other men. Bell was breathing hard, nervously fingering his cigarette. Captain Sutton was back in his old slouching position in the chair, his legs stretched out before him.

"I—I don't understand," Larry began. "Did I hear you say—Satan?"

"You did," Pearson replied. "Is it familiar?" He watched Larry's face closely. "You needn't answer," Pearson went on after a short silence. "Your face spoke for you. Now you can forget that name."

"He's all right, Earl," Jon Bell cut in. "He is Larry Donald, the novelist, all right. I've seen him around the night spots enough to recognize him. He writes fast adventure novels, not very good books but I hardly think he's the criminal type."

"Thanks for nothing," Larry said ruefully. "But I'd still like to know what happened to that letter. It was in my pocket when I left my car."

"Did you stop to talk to anyone before coming here?" Bell asked.

"No, I drove straight here, parked downstairs and came right up. The only person I spoke to was your man in the outer office."

"Lane would hardly pick your pocket," Pearson commented. "You're sure no one followed you?"

"Positive. I watched for that. There was a big black sedan that passed me right after I left the man in the road. But it came straight on. In fact, I tried to follow it."

"And no one spoke to you downstairs? Or jostled you?"

"By jove," Captain Sutton exclaimed. "He tripped over my feet when he came in—"

"Yes, and I grabbed him," Jon Bell said. "You and I should be under suspicion, Captain Sutton."

"Wait," Larry said. "Somebody *might* have bumped me! There was a crowd on the sidewalk!"

The three men exchanged glances.

"There went your letter," Bell said.

"This chap is really clever. And he seems to have some very good men working with him," Captain Sutton murmured nasally.

"Well, at least they couldn't steal the verbal message," Pearson said. "Or did they?"

"Okay," Larry said, "and I hope it chokes you if that's the way you're going to act. He said 'Tell Earl to watch radio—short wave—using Russian—' He died before he could finish."

"By jove! The Russians, eh?" exclaimed the captain.

"Could be," Pearson said thoughtfully. "But I'm inclined to think not. Russia is an ally. Besides," he added with a chuckle, "we have a list of Russian agents in this country and if Tucker had been referring to any of them he would probably have called them by name. Of course, there might be a new agent we don't have listed."

"How about Russian programs on the short wave length," Bell suggested.

"Yes, it sounded more as though he meant a Russian broadcasting station," Larry ventured.

"That might be it," Bell nodded.

"Well," Pearson said brusquely. "I'll detail men to watch all of the short wave stations. Russian as well as the other countries. You can't give us a description of the three men who attacked you, can you, Donald?"

Larry shook his head. "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I can't. It all happened so fast. I did get the impression that they were foreigners, but I don't know why. I feel inclined to say that at least two of them were short, stocky men. The one in front I can't remember at all. All I saw of him was the hand and the

gun that shot at me. I realize snap descriptions are liable to be wrong. They may have all been tall men."

"If they were foreigners," Bell said, "that would fit in with my theory that he is not using regular criminals but foreign agents who believe he will do their government a few valuable favors."

"Possibly, but hardly the time to discuss it," Pearson replied, nodding his head toward Larry.

"You've said enough already," Larry said. "Satan—a criminal too clever for the best in the FBI—using foreign agents—and what have you. What is this about? I've had a few bullets tossed at me already. I would like to know why."

"Sorry, Mr. Donald. Government business," Pearson said.

"If you can't, then don't tell me. However, my curiosity is aroused," said Larry, shrugging his powerful shoulders. "I hope they follow me . . ."

"You're not in a very safe position, Donald," Pearson said. "Better leave well enough alone. Now, unless you remember something else you want to tell us, you've helped all you can. Let me know where you are staying in the event that we arrest any of these men. Good day."

Larry turned toward the door.

"Wait a minute," Jon Bell said. "I have something to say."

CHAPTER TWO

LETTERS FROM SATAN

"LOOK, EARL," JON BELL EXCLAIMED IMPULSIVELY, "HOW ABOUT showing Larry Donald the letters?"

"Are you crazy, Jon?"

"No more than you were when you brought me into this case."

"You were a different proposition, Jon. I need your knowledge of New York and some of its screwiest inhabitants."

"No, you called me in because from the first this was an

unorthodox case and the usual approach would not work. I know you have the policeman's natural horror of the amateur dabbling in your cases. But amateurs can be helpful. Especially in cases which don't fit into the usual classifications. Larry Donald's novels are only fair, but he has a pretty keen mind, I would say. And he does have a flair for the unusual and unexpected. He might turn out to be a good investment."

"I don't like it," Pearson said, shaking his head as Larry watched him with a broad grin on his face. "What do you say, Captain Sutton?"

Captain Sutton straightened from contemplating his finger nails, and raked Larry with a keen glance. "If he's like most of you Americans," the captain drawled, "I expect he'll get into this case anyway. It might be better to have him around so you can watch him at least."

"If you don't tell me what it's all about pretty soon," Larry said, grinning, "I'll be forced to go home and write a book about this just to satisfy my own curiosity."

"God forbid," Jon Bell cried, throwing up his arms. "You see, Earl?"

"All right," agreed Pearson, "but I still think it's a mistake. The only reason I'm doing it is because I know damn well if I don't you'll just get him off to one side and tell him about it anyway. Here's the first letter, Donald. It was sent to my boss and was the reason for my being here in New York."

He tossed the letter across his desk. Larry picked it up. The envelope was postmarked in New York. The letter was on plain white paper. It was addressed to the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

My Dear Director James:

This is by way of notifying you of the recent formation of the Universal War Syndicate, with me as the Regional Director. Offhand, the formation of a syndicate would not interest you, although this one, I think, will. Our purpose will be to gather war secrets from every country and sell them to the highest bidder. In view of the present war, I believe that our venture may prove profitable for our stockholders.

Our first step, however, will be a criminal one. I am not in favor of crime but find this necessary in order to finance our representatives. You will understand, I'm sure. Our first operation will be the robbery

of the Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company in downtown New York. After that, I have a series of crimes, from robbery to kidnapping, planned. All of them are of major importance and you will, undoubtedly, want a special agent there in addition to the regular staff.

I will communicate further with the agent assigned to me.

Sincerely yours,
Satan II, Regional Director
Universal War Syndicate.

"Sounds like a crackpot," Larry said when he had finished.

"It does," admitted Pearson, "and we would have dismissed it as such except that we had already heard of a man calling himself Satan II, who was going to set up a super-spy service.

"I was assigned here to cover the case. Only four men knew of that assignment; Director James, Captain Sutton, Agent Lane and myself, all to be trusted. Yet the same day I moved into this office, the second letter was delivered here, addressed to me." He tossed another letter to Larry.

My Dear Pearson:

I was indeed pleased to learn that you had been assigned to cover my activities here in New York. There isn't a better man in the FBI and it will be a pleasure to work with you. Your assistant, Lane, will also prove competent, I imagine. I hope that I may also look forward to a certain amount of sport from the good Captain Sutton who I believe has accompanied you. Now for business.

I'm sorry not to give you more time to acclimate yourself to the situation but I am pressed for time. Therefore, this afternoon I shall rob the Metropolitan Bank, as announced in my earlier letter. Since I'm not yet sure of my business associates, I shall not give you the exact time. Later, perhaps, I can be more accurate.

After the Metropolitan, my agenda will consist of the following:

(1) Kidnap Arline Henderson
(2) Kidnap Barbara Renalt
(3) Rob the Central Middleton Bank, Wall Street Branch

That should be enough to give you the general idea. As other things come up I will advise you. Should the syndicate be so fortunate as to get a client in the meantime, you will be notified.

Happy hunting, my dear Mr. Pearson.

Sincerely yours,
Satan II, Regional Director
Universal War Syndicate.

"Cheeky cove, eh what?" Captain Sutton said as Larry put the letter down.

"Hell," Larry said, "it sounds like something a Hollywood director thought up one night when indigestion kept him awake. Did your Mr. Satan rob the bank as he had promised?"

"He did," Bell said, grinning, "and was Earl's face red when the local cops got through kidding him. You see, he called up

the bank and wanted to arrange protection about ten minutes after it had been robbed."

"He must have struck just about the time the letter was delivered," Pearson admitted ruefully. "Anyway, he got around two hundred thousand in cash and another hundred thousand in negotiable bonds. The way it was organized, he has a right to sound as cocky as he does. About noon, one man entered and started to open a new account; another man was with a vice-president discussing a loan; two were down in the safety deposit vault; and three others were standing in line to cash checks.

"At ten minutes past twelve they all drew revolvers and rounded up the employees and customers. Made them stand with their arms folded, so it would look all right from the street. At the same time, there was a *wreck* out in the street. A car blew a front tire and crashed over the sidewalk and into a store window. That drew the crowd and the cop on the beat. At twenty after twelve the gang had their money and were out of the bank.

"No one remembered anything definite enough to be used as a description of the men. They did notice that all of the men spoke with foreign accents."

"What about the man in the car?" Larry asked.

"That was the best trick of all," Bell put in. "He was completely innocent. What had happened was this. They had a man stationed outside in a car with a high-powered air rifle. At the proper time, he merely shot the tire of an oncoming car and the rest happened. They found the pellet inside the tire-casing later."

"Who are the two girls he's going to kidnap?" Larry asked.

"The Henderson girl," Bell said, "is the daughter of my boss, the publisher of the *Tattler*. The other is the daughter of Philip Renalt, of Renalt and Fenton, Wall Street brokers. Earl has a couple of men guarding them, but my bet is Satan will get them."

Lane stuck his head in the door again. "Philip Renalt is out here demanding to see you."

"Okay, send him in," Pearson said.

Lane disappeared and an animated truck rumbled through the doorway. Renalt was so wide he could barely make it through the door. A light blue-striped suit was draped over the outer boundaries. The sheet of paper he held was dwarfed by the pudgy fingers holding it.

"Who's Pearson?" he asked in a booming voice.

"I am," Pearson said. "What can I do for you?"

"Plenty! Do you know anything about this?" He handed over the sheet of paper. The others crowded around Pearson to read over his shoulder.

Dear Mr. Renalt:

We haven't been formerly introduced but if any reference is needed, I suggest you get in touch with Mr. Earl Pearson, of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I'm sure he will vouch for my integrity.

I intend to call on you very shortly. The plan is to kidnap your daughter Barbara. At present market value, I believe she should be worth at least $100,000.

Until we meet again, I am,

Sincerely yours,
Satan II, Regional Director
Universal War Syndicate.

"Well?" boomed the giant.

"Yes, I'm aware that there is a possibility of your daughter's being kidnapped."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I've done about all I can for the time being," Pearson said. "I've already detailed two men from the New York office to keep a watch on your daughter."

"What's this?" Renalt asked, stabbing with a huge finger toward the beginning of the letter. "Are you working with this criminal?"

"Hardly," Pearson said coldly. "Now, if you're through, you might use that door for an exit."

Renalt stalked to the door and turned. "If my daughter is kidnapped," he said, "there'll be hell to pay. Just because it is known that I am against the present administration, does not mean that I'm not entitled to the same amount of protection that is given to New Dealers. I insist on my rights!"

"You'll get them," Pearson said. "Now get out!"

The door slammed with emphasis.

"This Special Delivery letter arrived just about the time you left," he said. "I tried to get out in time to catch all of you, but Sutton evidently got away too quickly. There's no time to go get him now. The letter says three-thirty and it's ten after now."

He passed over the letter and Bell unfolded it.

Dear Pearson:

Just a quick note to let you know of a change in plans. Lest you think my success is due entirely to my organization, I am planning a little one-man hold-up. I expect a psychiatrist might term it the action of an ego-maniac, but I prefer to think of it merely as pride in one's work.

At three-thirty today an armored-car guard will deliver money to the ticket windows of the Grand Central Station. I will relieve him of it. Bring Captain Sutton and Mr. Bell with you.

Satan II.

"If he carries it out according to the letter, we'll get him this time," Pearson said.

"I've got five bucks that says you won't," Bell said, grinning.

"Taken," snapped Pearson.

It was between twenty and twenty-five after the hour when the three of them got out of the cab in front of Grand Central. Inside, they took up positions close to the ticket windows and waited, eyeing the passersby closely.

The station was no more crowded than usual. People stood around, waiting for trains, or for arriving friends, others scurried back and forth between the information booth and the windows. None of them looked very desperate. At 3:29 a train arrived and disgorged its passengers. Some rushed to the arms of those waiting, others hurried toward Forty-second Street, and a few stood around helplessly.

"There he comes," Pearson said, nudging Bell.

An armored-car guard was walking leisurely down the ramp, a small leather satchel in one hand, a gun held casually in the other. Another guard came just behind him, drawn gun in hand.

The three men by the ticket windows tried to watch everyone, but saw nothing suspicious. A few people shuttled back and forth between them and the guards. Several belated passen-

gers were hurrying toward the ramp as the guards came down.

"Do you suppose—" began Bell his arm starting to point to a stockily-built man, carrying a new pigskin bag, who was hustling toward the guards, his head bent down.

What followed, happened so quickly there was no time for Bell to finish his sentence, no time for anyone to do anything but stare.

The man with the pigskin bag was abreast of the first guard. He half-turned, showing his face for the first time. He was masked. A gun gleamed in his right hand. The gun barked once—twice, the whip-like crack reverberating through the station. A woman screamed.

The first guard never knew what hit him. The bullet from the heavy .45 struck him over the heart, whirled him half around and knocked him to the floor. As he fell, his finger tightened convulsively on the trigger, sending a bullet skipping across the floor to splash brightly against the information booth.

The second guard had his pistol half raised when the gun spoke the second time. He staggered backward one step, two steps, then crumpled to the floor, blood beginning to bubble from his lips, his gun falling from nerveless fingers. The clatter of the gun on the floor seemed unreasonably loud. The man with the pigskin bag leaned over the first guard and jerked at the leather satchel. His pigskin bag came open and the small satchel vanished into it.

For that death-packed moment, the three men stood motionless by the ticket windows. Then Pearson broke the spell by leaping forward with a yell, pulling the gun from his shoulder holster. But it was too late.

As he straightened, with the satchel in his pigskin bag, the masked man again raised his gun, almost straight up. His finger pulled on the trigger three times in rapid succession. Accompanying the angry crack of the gun was a sharper crash of the great chandeliers on the ceiling and glass began to rain to the floor. The people, who but a minute before had been intent on going nowhere, were suddenly a milling herd of

frightened sheep. Instinctively, they huddled together, pressing away from the man with the gun. From ticket windows to information booth they stretched, effectively blocking Pearson.

The masked man waved insolently over their heads, turned and walked briskly up the ramp. His right hand fumbled with the mask as he turned his back.

The sight of the vanishing figure drove Pearson almost mad. He struggled with the crowd, cursing and shoving, but they only bleated and pushed back, their faces vacant white blobs. Larry was in the thick of it too, trying to force a path. Bell stood to one side, a curious tight-lipped smile on his saturnine face.

By the time the crowd parted and let them through the masked man had disappeared. Gun still clenched in his hand, Pearson pounded up the ramp, followed by Larry and Bell. He burst out on the street, and into the arms of a burly cop.

"What do ye think ye are," the cop demanded pinioning the hand with the gun, "the Lone Ranger? Gimme that gun, before ye shoot yourself."

Pearson reached with his other hand and got out the little gold badge. "Federal business," he snapped. "Now let go, you clown!"

"Oh, it's a G-Man ye are," the cop said, releasing him. "But ye can't expect to go running around with a cannon in your fist and not get stopped. This is a law-abidin' town."

"Yeah," Pearson said bitterly, "we just saw an example of it. Did you notice a stocky man, in a brown overcoat, carrying a light pigskin bag just come out of the station?"

"Maybe a hundred of them," the cop answered with a grin. "This is Grand Central Station. You know, where the choo-choo comes in."

"Okay," Pearson said, scowling at Bell who was laughing silently. "But while you're thinking up your next joke, you might call in and report the murder of two armored-car guards in the station. My name's Pearson and you can get me at the Federal Building. You can tell Homicide that the guards were killed by Satan."

"Satan, did ye say? Glory be!" The cop crossed himself, as he ran over to his call box.

"Come on," Pearson said, motioning to a cab. The three men climbed in.

"I hate to say I told you so, but—I told you so," Bell said as the cab swung in a U-turn and headed down Park Avenue.

"Shut up!" Pearson said savagely. Then he smiled weakly. "No, I didn't mean that, Jon. But this is getting on my nerves. I thought that I had him that time for sure and then those damn fools had to block me off."

"No wonder," Larry said. "It's starting to get on my nerves too. It's like fighting a ghost."

"If those people had just stayed out of the way," continued Pearson. "The man is unbearably lucky."

"I don't think so," remarked Bell. "I'll bet anything that he knew that train was coming in at that time and knew that if it were timed just right, the crowd could be frightened into blocking us. He has a natural advantage in not caring if he hurts an innocent bystander but *you* must be careful."

"I suppose so," Pearson admitted.

"You know," Bell went on, "I've been thinking about this Satan, and I think I may have an idea who he is. Several years ago, when I was on the *Tribune* in Chicago, there was a guy who called himself The Dark Prince. His methods were very similar to these. He pulled plenty of jobs under the nose of the police. Eventually, they discovered that his real name was Stanley Porter but it did them no good. He disappeared the next day and was never heard from again. But I'll bet—" He was interrupted by the blatant blare of the taxi's horn.

A huge furniture van was pulling slowly out from a side street on the right. A black sedan was edging past the truck to its right. At the sound of the horn, the truck, instead of stopping or swerving to the right, plowed straight ahead into the path of the cab. The three men had a quick glimpse of a figure jumping from the driver's seat. Then they were busy hanging onto their seats. The cab driver threw his weight on his brakes and spun the steering wheel madly to the left.

Larry had a sensation of the truck rearing to meet them, then the crash came. There was the tinkling of breaking glass. The two men beside him, slid to the floor. Larry's head struck the edge of the meter, there was a sharp pain and for a moment he was dizzy. Then his head cleared and he could feel the warm trickle of blood down his forehead.

With the exception of the small cut on Larry's head, none of them was injured. They climbed out of the cab. The driver was already outside, his hands on his hips, cursing with a bitter gusto. Three blocks ahead, the black sedan was gathering speed as it swung toward Fifth Avenue.

As they walked around the front end of the truck, a group of men came running toward them from the side street. The bulky man in the lead came straight up to Pearson.

"Are you the lousy heel that swiped my truck?" he demanded angrily.

"Hell, no," Pearson said in disgust. He showed his badge. "What did you do, go off and leave the motor running?"

"Sure," the guy said, "I gotta make a delivery, ain't I? And look at it now! The boss will raise hell."

"Yeah," chimed in the cab driver, "an' who's gonna pay for my cab? That's what I wanna know, see!"

"The owner of the truck will have to pay you," Pearson said curtly. "Here," he tossed the cab driver a ten dollar bill and turned to Larry and Bell. "Come on. We'll grab another cab."

"You missed something," Bell said, pointing to the truck. Pearson and Larry looked. There, on the truck cab, printed with a piece of chalk, was *SATAN II.*

In their second cab, they arrived at the Federal Building without further mishap.

"Coming up?" Pearson asked, as he climbed out.

"Not now, Earl," Bell said. "I've got to get over to the paper and give the story to a rewrite man or Henderson will flay me alive. Then I'm going to drop Larry off at my place and by then it'll be time for me to start hitting some of the clubs. You know I've still got a Broadway column to write even if Satan is threatening our precious civilization. See you tomorrow."

"So long," Pearson said. He nodded at Larry. "I suppose I'll see you tomorrow too, Donald. Stick around and maybe you'll be able to write a novel that'll suit Jon."

"I don't think anything suits him but keyhole peeking," complained Larry.

Pearson laughed and turned into the building. Bell motioned the taxi driver on. Another ten-minute ride and the cab pulled to the curb.

Bell led the way into the *Tattler* building, up to his office in the city room. He threw the door open.

"Make yourself at home," he said, "while I turn this story in. Then I'll beat it up to my place and later, if you feel like it, you can make some of the rounds with me." He grinned and was off between the long row of desks and chattering typewriters.

Larry walked into the office and sank into a big leather chair. It was the first time he'd had a chance to think since the man had stumbled in front of his car.

He had wanted action but he'd gotten almost too much of it. He felt confused, dizzy from the things he'd heard and seen in the few hours in New York. Lighting a cigarette, he began trying to put some of the threads together, to evaluate the actors.

Earl Pearson, he thought, was a very competent law enforcer. He was a type, very common in the FBI, that functioned in a calm and efficient machine-like manner. Put Pearson up against any ordinary criminal or public enemy and it was only a question of time until he came in with his man. But Larry felt that for once the man was in over his head. He'd been trained to fight criminals who invariably made a mistake; it was only a question of gathering clues, analyzing and watching. Once you knew who your man was, or where and when he was going to strike, you merely walked in and arrested him.

But Satan II was something else again. Here was a criminal who announced himself with a flourish; who notified the police not only what he was going to do but the exact time he would do it—and then went ahead and completed his task. Pearson

was baffled, as would be any other policeman trained to expect certain things.

Captain Sutton was quite different. Larry had heard him say very little, yet had received the impression that he was a man who was very smug and complacent. He was the type of English operator who felt that everything came to him who waited —with God and the British Empire back of him. And Larry imagined that several times the captain had thought that Satan wouldn't have lasted long if he'd had Scotland Yard to contend with. Yet Larry was sure that a keen mind was back of that smug, restrained front; Captain Sutton would be much more capable of accepting, and dealing with the bizarre side of Satan II than would Pearson and his men. But perhaps he wouldn't try to do anything unless he felt that his country was definitely threatened.

Jon Bell was a bit of a puzzle. As much as Larry was beginning to like Bell, he could also come nearer to seeing the columnist as the leak—or even the Satan himself. Bell's seemingly inexhaustible supply of nervous energy, those little black eyes that saw and catalogued everything within their range, fitted better into the personality frame of the criminal as Larry had imagined it.

Another thing that bothered him was Bell's attitude toward the whole setup. Back there in the Grand Central Station, the columnist had seemed to be only partly touched by the murder of the two guards. While he and Pearson had been horrified at the vicious murder of the guards, Bell had stood aloof, seeming to draw a certain amount of sardonic amusement from Pearson's bafflement. Maybe he was only guilty of a hardness acquired in his reporter days, but Larry decided that he would at least keep an eye on Bell.

Then there was the gargantuan broker, Renalt whose visit to the FBI office had seemed too much like the performance of a ham actor. Maybe he was naturally a phoney in life, then again maybe he was mixed up in the mess somehow. He was too big to have been the man in the station, but he might be the brain behind Satan II.

Larry tried to remember more about the three men who had run toward him as he bent over the man on the road. But they were only dim blurs on the screen of his memory. He could hear again the whisper of the dying man, "Tell Earl to watch radio—short wave—using the Russian—"

The Russian what? Even though he himself had suggested some Russian broadcasting station, Larry felt there was more behind that unfinished sentence. But what?

He pulled out his handkerchief and dabbed at the dried blood on his forehead. The skin was puffed up in a beautiful goose egg and it hurt like hell when he touched it. He was conscious of the fact that his head was aching. He leaned back in the chair and shut his eyes.

"Hello," a voice said from the doorway.

Larry opened his eyes and for a moment thought he was dreaming. But he'd never had a dream that lovely.

"Hello," he answered uncertainly.

"Oh," she exclaimed as he turned his head, "you've cut your head! Wait just a minute." She was gone with a flurry of skirts, leaving Larry gaping at the empty doorway.

She was soon back with a small roll of gauze in one hand, a wet cloth and a bottle of iodine in the other. "I'll fix it right up for you," she said. "When I was fourteen I wanted to be a nurse and I've never had a chance to play at it since then. Everyone around here is either disgustingly healthy or afraid of my amateur hand."

She bent over him and began carefully to sponge the dried blood from around the wound. As she worked, Larry got a good chance to study her through half-closed lids.

She appeared to be about twenty-three or -four, with the radiant grace of youth in her every movement. Her white-ruffled black dress clung to her soft curves. Her hair was black, with lights in its deep waves. Her eyes were blue, he noticed as she examined the wound. All in all, she was something out of this world.

"What happened to your head?" she asked as she dabbed iodine on the abrasion.

"I bumped it on a taxi meter," he said, "as a protest against the speed with which it worked."

She laughed musically. "Are you a new reporter here?" she asked.

"No, but maybe I'll ask for a job now. I'm Larry Donald."

"There," she said as she fastened the gauze and stepped back. "Who did you say you were?"

"Larry Donald."

"Not *the* Larry Donald?"

"I expect so," he confessed, "unless you're referring to some unpleasant fellow."

"But isn't that wonderful? I've read all your books and loved them. And to think I get to meet the great Larry Donald over a bleeding head!"

"You haven't told me your name," Larry said pointedly.

"Oh, I'm sorry. It's Arline Henderson."

"The girl who's to be kidnapped?"

"The girl who's to be kidnapped," she agreed. "And is Dad furious! He thinks it's the height of impudence that anyone should even think of kidnapping his little darling."

"I thought," Larry said, looking out the door, "that there were supposed to be a couple of Federal men guarding you?"

"There were, but I lost them." She giggled. "I got tired of having them always at my heels, so while I was at the Club Vermouth, I went into the ladies' powder room. It has two doors and I went out another door and came down here. They're probably still waiting for me to come out." She laughed again.

"You got that from my last book," he accused.

"That's right."

"I'll have to be careful after this," he said, "or I'll be accused of putting ideas in people's heads. You know you shouldn't have done it."

"If you ask me," she said, "I think it's all a gag. Satan the Second indeed!"

Jon Bell bustled in. "All ready, Larry? Oh hello, Arline."

"Hello, Jon," she said. "Why didn't you tell me you knew Larry Donald?"

"I didn't until today. Come on, Larry, let's go."

"If you'll bring him around again," the girl said, "I'll make it a point to visit Dad more often."

"Yeah," said Bell. He turned to Larry. "Watch her, Larry. She's an artful wench."

"No respect for the boss's daughter, that's the trouble," Arline said.

"I'll see you again, anyway," Larry promised, looking deep into her eyes. He followed Bell out of the office, his mind on the girl.

●

It seemed to Larry that he had only been sleeping a minute when he felt Bell shaking him the next morning. He had accompanied Bell on his round of cabarets and they had come back to Bell's apartment around four in the morning. Larry was stretched on the studio couch in the living room.

"Come on, snap out of it," Bell was saying. "There's going to be a busy day ahead of us from the way it looks."

"What the hell," Larry said sleepily. "I come to New York for a vacation which means sleeping until afternoon instead of till noon."

"Not if you're going to chase Satan," Bell answered. He was fully dressed. "Pearson just called up and said he had another letter from our satanic friend and we should hustle down."

"Okay, Dr. Watson," Larry jumped out of the bed and headed for the shower.

"We'll grab a cup of coffee here," Bell called after him. "I'll put it on. And shake the lead out of your pants. Fate and the Federal Bureau of Investigation wait on no man."

Within twenty minutes the two of them were on their way up in the Federal Building. Jeffry Lane was in the outer room. "Go on in," he said, motioning to the door. They entered.

Pearson was seated at his desk and it almost seemed to Larry as if he had been there all night. Captain Sutton was sitting across from him.

"About time you got here," Pearson said, as they entered. "This is going to be as busy a day as you've seen in a long time."

"What now?" Bell asked, grinning. "Satan going to kidnap LaGuardia?"

"I have two letters from him this morning," Pearson went on, ignoring Bell's remark. "The first one says that at 2:08 exactly, this afternoon, our friend is going to blow up an American munitions factory on Long Island. He designates the factory and hopes we will be there. Then, he says, at three o'clock on the nose, he is going to rob the Manhattan Middleton Bank. We are also invited to attend. He points out that we can make both since the munitions factory is only a forty or forty-five minute drive from the bank.

"The second letter is the confirmation that an earlier plan has been carried out. Here read it." He tossed over the letter and Larry read it over Bell's shoulder.

Dear Pearson:

Last night between midnight and one, I took charge of Arline Henderson. Sorry I couldn't notify you of the exact time. The ransom is to be $100,000 which Henderson will turn over to you to deposit in your name at the Manhattan Middleton Bank. Thanks for your cooperation, old man.

Sincerely yours,
SATAN II.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNDER COVER OF DAYLIGHT

BELL WHISTLED SOFTLY AS HE FINISHED READING THE LETTER. "So the money's to be deposited in the bank under your name! Our friend Beelzebub seems to have a sense of humor. Are you going to do it, Earl?"

"Of course," Pearson said. "If I don't, he may find it out and kill the Henderson girl."

Larry's face had whitened as he read the letter. He had only seen Arline Henderson once, but before going to sleep the night before he had thought of meeting her again and found

the thought pleasant. The thought of her in the hands of the man who had killed the two guards so callously, filled him with fear.

"I wouldn't do it if I were you," Bell was saying.

"Why not?" Pearson demanded. "Our policy is to play along with such demands until the victim is out of danger. Anyway, the ransom money will be along with the bank money and we can watch both at once."

Bell shook his head. "No, Earl, it won't do. Can't you see that's just what he wants you to do? When the money is delivered here, you make a trip to the bank as though you were making the deposit. Only instead you keep the money, or put it somewhere else. He will never know the difference, if he does get away with robbing the bank and will return Arline anyway."

"Well, I don't know," Pearson hesitated. "What do you think, Captain Sutton?"

The lanky Britisher stirred in his chair and glanced owlishly at Bell.

"I really don't know," he drawled. "Possibly Mr. Bell is correct. It shouldn't make much difference either way. We can't help but catch the blighter this time, you know. But it might be wise to put the money elsewhere."

"I think so too," Larry put in, "if you don't think it will place Arl—Miss Henderson in any more danger."

"You see I told you Larry would be all right," Bell said, grinning. "He already has a personal interest in the case."

Larry flushed.

"I wish," Pearson said peevishly, "that you'd stop seeing an item for your damned column in everything and pay a little more attention to the case. Incidentally your boss called up and raised holy hell with me. Said if I didn't get his daughter back safely, he'd run me out of the country."

"He'll do it, too," Bell agreed.

"He also added that if you were helping me, to tell you that the same went for you."

"A nice guy," Bell grinned. "When you save his hundred grand for him you might tell him it was my idea. He'll like me

better for that than if I added a million to his circulation. To him a hundred thousand in the hand is worth a million on the subscription list. You are going to take my advice about the money, aren't you?"

"I suppose so," Pearson said. "But it will be just as safe in the bank. We've got him this time though. The captain and I have just finished laying the plans. If he dares to come at all, he'll never get away. And I doubt if he'll come."

"You and the captain, eh? The Scotland Yard touch as it were."

"Right-o," the captain said. "And if you don't mind my saying so, I think that's what this needed all the time. The Scotland Yard touch. We don't allow such bounders to stay around long, y'know."

"Remind me," Bell said in a stage whisper to Larry, "when we're alone to tell you that the British lost the Revolution because they lacked a sense of humor."

"Cut it out, Jon," Pearson said sharply. "Sit down and listen to the plan. If you have anything better to offer, we'll listen."

"Okay," Bell said. He lit another cigarette from the butt in his hand and took the chair next to Sutton. Larry sat down in the other chair.

"Well, here's the setup," Pearson began tensely. "I've already made arrangements to rent a second-floor front office in the building directly across the street from the bank. We'll put a squad of twenty FBI men in there. A couple of our men are already over there fixing up a couple of direct wire phones. One will lead into the bank; the other to a police call box at the end of the block.

"Then Commissioner Summer has promised me two hundred uniformed patrolmen. These men will completely surround the block. A lieutenant will remain at the call box and we will call the bank and the police every ten minutes, beginning at 2:30, to check on everything. If our Satan is able to crash through that and rob the bank, he'll have to make himself invisible. Jon, you and Donald and myself will go out to the munitions factory to try to stop that. Lane will take charge

at the bank, with Captain Sutton assisting, until we get back before the deadline. Any suggestion, Jon?"

"No," Bell admitted, "I can't think of anything to improve on that, but just the same I think I'd like to make a little bet of ten bucks with you that he will rob the bank some way."

"Nonsense, Jon. I won't take your money, but you're wrong."

"That's two pounds isn't it?" said the captain. "I think I might like to take that wager, Mr. Bell."

"Done."

"How about you, Mr. Donald," Pearson asked. "You have any suggestions?"

"No, I guess not. The cordon around the block will stop all traffic past that point, both pedestrians and cars."

"Right."

"But," Larry said, "if Satan sees the cordon and turns back, what about Miss Henderson. Won't she be harmed?"

"I think not," Pearson said. "I think he'll make some other, and more direct arrangements for the delivery of the ransom and then we'll be able to go after him as soon as she's released. She may have some clue to his headquarters. Anyway, I'm sure that this is the end of Satan, the Second."

"Counting your devils before they've fallen," Bell said softly.

"We'll see," was the confident rejoinder.

To Larry, impatient for news of Arline Henderson, the hours crawled slowly by until it was time to go. The money from Henderson was delivered to Pearson, who then went to the bank, guarded by two of his men, as though he were making a deposit. All morning, and into the afternoon, men were coming to the office in the Federal Building and then bustling away. Plans, plans, plans. Pearson was bursting with impatience.

Larry sat around the office and listened to the endless details until he could stand it no longer. Then he went out on the street and walked for what seemed hours. But the clock only read eleven-thirty. He went into cafeterias and little restaurants and drank coffee until it was running out of his ears. He sat in City Hall Park and watched a man feeding pigeons. Finally he went back to the office and sat around again.

At last the zero hour approached. Jeffry Lane and Captain Sutton had already left for the bank to direct things there. Pearson, Bell and Larry climbed into a fast government sedan, waiting in front of the building, and headed for Long Island. Pearson was driving. Larry sat with him, while Bell bounced around in the back seat, smoking furiously and making caustic remarks anent Pearson's driving.

It was approximately a forty-minute drive and it was close to one-thirty when they arrived. Pearson had phoned early that morning and the Long Island police, the county officers, a few state police, and a detachment of the U. S. Army were already there. Following his directions, the factory had already been cleared of its workers and a thorough search of the building was under way.

Pearson, Bell and Larry joined in that search. From top to bottom the building was gone over as carefully as a housewife looks for moths in her bureaus. They looked under every single piece of paper and metal; they searched through the desks and files of every office; they even moved the big gray-nosed gun shells. The search yielded exactly nothing. Finally at two o'clock the exhausted men were ordered from the building. Lines were set up outside a safety zone.

"I'm beginning to think this is a phony," Pearson said, wiping the grime from his face. "There certainly isn't anything in there, not even a wire leading to a switch. He probably just wanted to draw us away from the bank."

"Unless," Larry suggested, "he was smart enough to plant several dummy shells in there containing clockwork to set them off. We wouldn't have been able to recognize them from the real shells."

"That's it!" exclaimed Bell. "That's it exactly. That would explain the reason for having the explosion come at such an odd time—eight minutes past the hour. That was one thing that puzzled me. It seemed too pat to blame it all on mere eccentricity. Didn't I tell you, Earl, that Larry would be a valuable asset? He's right, but its too damn late to do anything about it."

"We'll see," Pearson said grimly. "It's five minutes past now."

To the waiting officers, the next three minutes seemed like

eons. It was probably very similar to the way a soldier feels when he's waiting to go over the top. There were more than a hundred of them, yet they all seemed to hold their breath as if by sheer concentration they could keep the building from being blown up. Larry found himself biting his lip nervously. Little Bell was fairly jumping from one foot to the other in excitement.

"It's eight past," Pearson suddenly shouted. "It—"

The first thing they saw, the thing that sheared Pearson's speech off at his lips was the center of the building bulge out as though some giant animal was butting its way through the roof. Suddenly the bricks gave way with a sullen *whoosh*. There was a puff of smoke and then the deafening clap of the explosion itself. For several seconds this was succeeded by minor explosions and other sections of the building gave up their futile resistance and collapsed. Bricks and pieces of metal rained over the surrounding field. Luckily, the safety line was far enough away so that no one was in danger.

"Well, he did it. . . ." Pearson breathed, disappointment wreathing his words.

"My God," yelled Bell, "let me to a phone quick! Henderson will almost forget his daughter's kidnapping with this on the front page."

"I'll give you two minutes," Pearson said grimly. "We've got to get back to the bank."

"I only need one minute," Bell said over his shoulder, as he ran into a store nearby.

True to his word, Bell was out within little more than a minute. Pearson gunned the big sedan and they were headed back for New York. Pearson drove silently, his lips a taut line. He had the siren open on the car.

They were about halfway there, the big sedan flashing along the highway at breakneck speed, when the motor coughed. It struggled to resume its steady roar, then gave up and died. The car began to slow.

"What the hell . . ." Pearson muttered.

"Sounds like you're out of gas," Larry said.

"Impossible! The gauge says 'full.' "

"Well, something's strictly not kosher," Bell said as the car coasted to a stop. "Let's take a quick look."

They piled out of the car and around to the back.

Pearson unscrewed the gas tank cap and took it off. Something dangled from the cap.

"Looks like an infernal machine," Bell said, grinning.

There was a small wooden box, with a lid underneath, fastened to the bottom of the cap. Hanging from the lid of the box was a float attached to a pliable wire.

"What the hell can that be?" Larry asked.

Suddenly Pearson cursed angrily. He leaned closer to the small box and then pointed into it.

"Sugar," he said. "They put this little box of sugar in here. It was closed until the gas sank low enough for the float to pull open the lid. That released the sugar into the tank. And that clogged up the carburetor."

"I'd say that was quite a compliment for you," Bell said quietly. "Or maybe for all of us. Satan certainly wanted to keep you from being on time."

"Maybe we can still make it," Pearson said, flagging a car. But the car didn't stop. Five cars swept by without even slacking speed. Finally in anger, Pearson jerked his gun and waved it at the sixth car. It came to a jerky stop. A man and woman were in the front seat.

"P-p-please," the frightened man began.

"We're not holdup men," Pearson cut in, pulling the gold badge from his pocket. "Take us to the Manhattan Middleton Bank as fast as your car'll go. Government business." The three of them climbed in the rear.

At the next stop-light a traffic cop was leaning his motorcycle against the curb. Pearson ordered the driver to slow up, flashed his badge again and a moment later they were again speeding toward the city, the motorcycle cop clearing the way.

It was just ten minutes past three when the car pulled up at the end of the block and let the three men out. The cordon of police were still around the block, a restless wave of blue. Bell

chuckled to himself and even Larry felt inclined to grin at the number of men standing around waiting for their will-o'-the-wisp. But it was a weak grin for he was still remembering that that same elusive figure still had the Henderson girl.

"Anything happened?" Pearson snapped at the gold-braided cop who saluted as they came up.

"Not a thing," the lieutenant said. "As quiet as a tomb. I guess he couldn't make it today."

"I doubt it," Pearson said, and led the way through the line of men. Larry and Bell followed him down the street.

As they came abreast of the bank, they could see no signs of life within it.

"That's funny," muttered Pearson. He shaded his eyes and looked again. There were no indications of any movement visible.

"Something's wrong," he snapped. "Come on!" He broke into a run, the two following. They dashed into the building that held the Federal men and up the stairs to the second floor.

CHAPTER FIVE

CROSSED WIRES

THE ROOM WAS FILLED WITH FEDERAL MEN WHEN THEY BURST IN. Most of them stood around the walls, leaving the center of the room fairly free to move around in. They watched Lane tensely, awaiting the signal to go into action. They cradled their riot-guns in their arms. Jeffry Lane was at the phone, jangling it up and down furiously. His face was pale and a worried expression was rapidly coming into his eyes.

Captain Sutton had been standing at the window, staring intently across the street toward the bank. As they came in, he whirled toward them, startled.

"What happened?" he asked. "Don't tell me the blighter has done it again!"

"He blew up the munitions factory according to schedule," Pearson replied. "But what about here?"

"I don't think anything has happened," Lane answered. "I've been calling the bank regularly as planned. They reply everything is all right. The police cordon reports the same thing. I'm trying to reach the bank now but they don't answer."

He placed the receiver to his ear and listened. Pearson stepped across the room and looked toward the bank across from him.

"I don't like this," he said. "There didn't seem to be any sign of life inside that bank as we came by. I wonder—"

Lane interrupted. "Good Lord! No wonder there's no answer. The line is dead!"

Pearson leaped for the door. "Come on! Something is wrong at the bank. We'll find out."

He rushed out of the office, followed by all but two men who took up their positions at the window. They rested their guns on the window sill and waited.

Pearson led the rest across the street to the bank and entered. There was no one in sight. Amazed, he stopped just inside the door. The others crowded behind him.

"Jove! Did everyone just walk out—" Captain Sutton exclaimed, for once his traditional British calm ruffled. "I can't understand this. I was watching the entrance continuously!"

"They're not here, that's sure," Jon remarked. "Looks like Satan pulled off another job."

Suddenly they heard a drumming noise from an office to the right. Three quick strides that were more like wild leaps, and Pearson reached the door. It was locked but the key was in the keyhole. He turned it and flung the door open. There, in the large office, lay about twenty men and women, bound and gagged.

It took but a few minutes to release them. "This is all your fault, Pearson," snapped a gray-haired man, the president of the bank, as the gag was removed from his mouth. "I shall see that you are held responsible for this fiasco!"

"What do you mean?"

"It was your men that tied us up like this! At least, your man Lane phoned and said he was sending them over to tie

us up! I never heard of such a ridiculous plan to stop a robbery!"

"What's this?" demanded Pearson turning to the astounded Lane.

"I don't know what he's talking about," Lane exclaimed. "I didn't call him about any men! Captain Sutton and the others heard every call I made." He turned to the captain for support.

"Right-o!" Captain Sutton said. "Nothing was said about sending any men over at all!"

"The call came over the direct wire," the bank president insisted. "It had to come from you!"

"We'll thrash this out later," Pearson said. "Right now I want you to have your clerks check on what's missing. Get me a rough estimate of what's missing. And you, Lane," Pearson snapped, "send a man down the block to bring Lieutenant Murphy here."

One of the men left immediately. The president dispatched a clerk to check on the cashboxes and vaults. In the meantime, the room was cleared of the other employees. Within a few minutes, Lieutenant Murphy came puffing through the door.

"Did you want me, Mr. Pearson?" Murphy grunted as he came up to the group.

"Yes. Are you sure, lieutenant, that no one came out through your line? And I mean no one—no taxicabs with pregnant women—nothing!"

"Of course, I'm sure!" Murphy replied promptly. "No one, that is, except the four men Lane sent out. But they were Federal men and—"

"Four of my men?" Lane exclaimed.

"That's what the lieutenant said," Pearson snapped. "Did you send any men out?"

"No, sir! None of my men went through. They're all still here."

"Why," the surprised police officer cried, "you called me yourself and told me they were coming!"

There was a stupefied look on Lane's face. He turned to

several of his men, his eyes questioning them. They shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders in amazement. Then Lane turned to Captain Sutton. "You were with me all the time, Captain," Lane stammered.

"You're right, lad," Captain Sutton said. Turning to Pearson, he said, "Look here, old boy, Lane never made any such phone call. And I don't believe any of us is crazy."

"Well, neither am I," Murphy snapped angrily. "I know what Lane told me!"

"All right, all right," Pearson interrupted irritably. "Just tell me what did happen—everything."

"Well," Lane said, "we started checking with the bank and the police every ten minutes beginning at two-thirty according to the plans we had made beforehand. We gave them no instructions or orders. Just asked them if everything was all right. When they said yes, I hung up. A few minutes before three, I sent Captain Sutton across the street to check personally with the guards at the back door of the bank. Everything was all right there. He came back and watched from the window and I stayed with the phones."

"And you saw no one in the street, Captain Sutton?"

"Not so much as a titmouse," the captain answered.

"Okay," Pearson said, turning to the policeman. "Now you, Lieutenant Murphy."

"Nothing on our end, sir. The calls kept coming through every ten minutes. Then about three, Mr. Lane called me and said four of his men were coming out with some equipment and would I send them down to the Federal Building in a police car. They came and I sent them."

"Was it the same voice on all the calls?"

"It was."

"Can you describe the men who came out?"

"Why no," the lieutenant said sheepishly. "I didn't pay much attention. Only one of them spoke. He was a rather ordinary-looking man who spoke like a college graduate."

"Now your story, Mr. Gardner," Pearson asked, turning to the bank president.

"It's about the same here up to a few minutes before three. Then when Mr. Lane called and said there had been a slight change in plans and he was sending three men over to see me. I was to tell my employees to carry out their orders. The men came in and said that Mr. Lane instructed them to tie me and my assistants up. It was part of a plan to trap the crooks. I didn't understand, but of course, I cooperated with them. Later, they brought in the rest of my staff and laid them, bound and gagged, in the room. I suppose they held them up—if these three were actually the bank robbers. . . . Yes, Henry?" This last was addressed to the clerk who had just entered the room.

"I—I've taken a quick check, Mr. Gardner," the man said. "And it's very bad, sir. Extremely so, I'm afraid."

"Well, well?" Gardner asked impatiently. "How much was it?"

"I only made an estimate, sir. It might be less, but I'm afraid . . ." the clerk's voice trailed off as he turned to stare at the wall past Gardner. He was obviously reluctant to give an estimate of the sum taken.

"Speak up, damn you," Gardner shouted. "How much do you think they took?"

"I—I believe they got close to a million dollars in cash and securities, Mr. Gardner. The vault was still open, you know."

Gardner paled. For a moment, he buried his face in his hands. "My God," he moaned, "we're ruined!" He started to leave the room, staggered then got control of himself. He turned back and glared at Pearson. "This is all your fault, young man! I'm going to get in touch with the Attorney General at once and—"

Pity that had softened Pearson a moment before, turned into quick anger. "Shut up!" snapped the harassed Federal man.

"Well, at least we know that Satan got away with the money," Jon Bell remarked. "But how did he do it?"

"I think I know how," Larry interrupted. He had been listen-

ing carefully to all the explanations and noted the contradictions. It was obvious that the men were not lying. Each had told exactly what had occurred at his end of the line. There could be, then, only one solution, Larry decided. "I have an idea and with a little search, we might prove it."

"What idea have you?" Pearson asked, looking at Larry doubtfully.

"It's just an idea, but I think you and your men might find the necessary proof," Larry said.

"I hope you're not sending us on a wild-goose chase," Pearson warned him, "but we'll try it. This thing has to have some explanation."

"It has," Larry replied. "If you'll come across the street again, I think I can show you."

Bell, Captain Sutton, Lieutenant Murphy and Lane followed the two of them across the street. Larry stopped at the sidewalk and pointed upward.

"If you'll notice," he said, "Captain Sutton would be unable to see anyone leaving this building going up the street. Especially since his attention was focused on the bank across the street. Neither would he be able to see anyone coming or going to the rear of the bank. That, too, was out of his line of vision while he stood watch at the window."

"Quite right," Captain Sutton said, coming up behind them. "I don't remember thinking of looking down to the entrance of our own building."

"Now let's go inside," Larry said, leading the way.

The two Federal men were still standing guard at the windows as they came in. Pearson nodded to them. "You boys can leave your posts now," he said. "The bank has already been robbed and Satan has flown off again."

The men stared at him, amazed. But they were well-trained and accustomed to orders. They took their guns and walked out of the room.

Larry pointed to the phones. "Now I want you to look at these wires."

Pearson went over and examined them.

"They lead straight down through the floor," he said.

"Yes, right near this wall," Larry pointed out. "Now come downstairs again."

They trooped down the stairs. Larry led the way past the elevators to a door opening into a little closet where the porter's tools were stored.

"Clever bounder, what?" Captain Sutton exclaimed. "I'm dashed if I don't see what this young man is driving at. The wires must come through this closet."

"Yes," Larry said. "They come down right alongside this door. This storeroom is directly under the room you were using, Lane." Larry looked at Pearson. "It's my guess that Lane never spoke to Mr. Gardner or Lieutenant Murphy."

"Oh, yes he did," Murphy began insisting, but Larry stopped him with an impatient wave of his hand.

"The way I figure this out, one of Satan's men was hidden in here some time last night. The other three hid in another building in the rear of the bank. That way, they were inside the cordon before it was formed. The man hidden in this building must have known every detail of your plans. How he got the information, I don't know. But he knew it and used it beautifully. He tapped both phones and carried on all the conversations. In other words, when Lane thought he was talking to the bank president or to Lieutenant Murphy, he was really talking to Satan's henchman!"

"But I'd have recognized his voice," Lane protested.

"Not if he disguised it," Larry answered. "Anyone clever enough to plan this job would certainly place a good operative to handle the phones. And it was all planned carefully."

"I see it," Pearson said. "He did the same thing with the bank president and Murphy, making them think they were talking to Lane.

"He gave each the instructions he wanted them to carry out. When he was through, he merely unhooked the wires and joined the others at the police line. Everything was based on perfect timing."

"It sounds like our friend Satan's work," Jon Bell said.

"Especially his perfect knowledge of police methods and psychology."

"Logical enough, Larry," Pearson admitted. "The wires here are cut. It fits in with Lane finding his line dead when he tried to ring up the bank the last time." Pearson turned to Larry and patted him on the back. "I don't know how you do it, but I believe you reconstructed the crime correctly."

Bell beamed in approval as though Larry's success was a personal triumph for him.

"See what I handed you, Earl?" he said. "The makings of a real detective." Then he turned to Captain Sutton. "Don't forget you owe me ten bucks."

"Right-o," the captain replied cheerfully, reaching into his pocket for a fat wallet.

"This is a hell of a time to be worrying about a ten-dollar bet," Pearson said.

"Well," grinned Bell, "it wasn't my million bucks that was stolen."

"Let's go back to the bank," said Pearson, ignoring the remark. "Murphy, see if you and your men remember enough of a description of these men to put out an alarm. Probably won't do any good, but we might as well try it."

As they left the building, Larry noticed Lane looking up at the window. Then he remembered that while they had been up in the office, Lane, instead of listening to him, had been examining the window. Now he saw Lane stoop over, pick something up from the ground and quickly slip it into his pocket. There was a thoughtful expression on his face as he joined Larry in the rear of the group.

Back in the office of the FBI man, they sat around trying to digest the meaning of the events of the past few hours.

For the fifteenth time, Pearson shook his head glumly, and said, "I don't understand it. Over two hundred men, each trained to fight crime and criminals and they can't stop four men! They can't even remember enough to piece together an intelligent description of the robbers!"

"That's just the point I've been trying to pound into your

head, Earl," Jon argued. "They are trained to fight criminals—"

"What would you call Satan?" Captain Sutton asked, drawling and giving his words a nasal twang that sounded close to a sneer. "You wouldn't by any chance call the bounder a gentleman, would you, Jon?"

"Why not?" Bell snapped at him. "Most bounders are gentlemen—and vice versa!" Then he turned back to Pearson. "Look, Earl, Satan is not a criminal in the ordinary sense of the word. He is a super-criminal. You can't use the methods that net the run-of-mill crook on him. The police are doing just what he wants them to do each time! He makes his plans after he knows just how you are going to react to a particular crime."

"I'm afraid you give Satan too much credit," Pearson said.

"I don't agree," Captain Sutton broke in. "Mr. Bell has been correct about Satan right along. Surprisingly so, I might say. And I do think he is quite right, you know. Now if Scotland Yard were conducting this case . . ."

The phone rang and Captain Sutton fell silent. Pearson reached for the receiver and answered wearily. The conversation, chiefly from the other side, continued for some time. When he finally hung up, Pearson turned to Bell.

"That was your boss," he said. "Miss Henderson returned home about five minutes ago. She can't help us at all. The men took her in a cab as she was coming out of a night club. They put her to sleep with a hypodermic. When she came to she was in a bare room with no windows. She saw one man while she was there but he was always masked. He spoke with a slight German accent. This morning she was drugged again. When she came to just a little while ago, she was in a stolen car, parked a block from your paper."

"Thank God, she's safe then!" Larry exclaimed in heartfelt accents.

"Oh, yes," Pearson went on dryly. "Henderson was properly appreciative of the fact that I had saved his money. You told him when you phoned in your story of the bank robbery, I presume, Mr. Newshound Bell!"

"Yeah," Bell said, grinning. "I didn't want him grieving over two things at the same time."

Before anyone could make further comments on the latest information, the phone rang again. Pearson answered. The three other men could hear the booming voice on the other end of the wire as plainly as if they had the receiver glued to their ears.

"This is T. J. Renalt," roared the metallic voice from the other end of the wire.

"Yes, Mr. Renalt," Pearson replied. He rolled his eyes at the men watching him. The gesture was appropriately expressive.

"You can call your men off. My daughter is now perfectly safe and won't need your guards, Mr. Pearson."

"You don't say?" Pearson said. "Do you mind if I judge the matter? I'll take my men off when *I* believe she is safe, Mr. Renalt. Not before!"

"Well, I do mind it!" Renalt roared. "I got another notice from Satan saying that for twenty thousand dollars, he'll leave her alone. My daughter is dear to me, Mr. Pearson, and since you have proved yourself completely unable to stop this Satan, I intend to take matters into my own hands. I have already sent him the money according to his instructions. Just now, I'm not asking you for advice. I am merely informing you."

"Thanks for your cooperation, Mr. Renalt," Pearson said sarcastically. "Don't think that you have not been helpful, Mr. Renalt—because you haven't!" He slammed the receiver down, hard.

"By Jove," Captain Sutton began. "Such a lack of patriotism—"

"Yes, yes, I know, Captain. Undreamed of in Scotland Yard, I know." Pearson waved his hand at Captain Sutton in a gesture of helplessness. "Nevertheless, that's the help we get from those we are trying to help. He couldn't have helped less if he was working with Satan."

"On the contrary," Larry broke in. "I think Mr. Renalt has just done you a great service."

"He did?" Pearson asked.

"He merely told you what Satan was planning to do next!" Larry announced. "And this time, I think Satan has slipped up!"

CHAPTER SIX

THE FRUIT OF APPEASEMENT

THEY STARED AT LARRY IN SURPRISE. THERE WAS A SLIGHTLY contemptuous smile on Captain Sutton's face, but it had more humor than insult in it. Pearson, too, noticed it, but Jon Bell spoke first.

"Captain Sutton does not appear to be impressed, Larry. Not Scotland Yard's methods, you know," he laughed. "They don't believe in intuition. Pure, methodical science, you know, old boy, and all that sort of thing." He imitated Captain Sutton's nasal twang perfectly.

Captain Sutton laughed and slapped himself on the thigh. "Dashed good, Bell," he said. "I must admit I was a bit of a bounder to laugh at Mr. Donald, you know. But you jolly well showed me my place."

"No hard feelings, Captain," Larry said. "I do sound more sure of myself than I should be."

"What makes you think you know Satan's next step, Larry?" Pearson asked.

"We all heard Renalt's conversation," Larry said.

"Yes, the invention of the telephone was no asset to that man," Pearson replied dryly. "He doesn't need one to make himself heard. My ear is still throbbing from the pounding it took."

"We heard it even to the exclamation points," Bell said.

"And what do you think, Larry?" Pearson asked.

"I think Renalt is a phoney from the word go! No man could be like that and live with himself. But he showed himself a thorough coward."

"And that leads you to believe—what?" Captain Sutton asked.

"That Satan knows it too!"

"Where does that get us?" Bell interrupted. "I think we're all convinced that Satan is a pretty shrewd article. We didn't need this."

"Not to know what Satan is like," Larry admitted. "But to know what he will do next. I don't think Satan will be satisfied with the twenty thousand Renalt already paid him. That's too small a sum to buy Satan off."

"I think you're right," Pearson said. "He's after far bigger stakes."

"Knowing the kind of coward Renalt really is, Satan is going to milk him dry," Larry went on.

"Look here, this Satan couldn't—not after . . ." Captain Sutton began to retort, but ceased suddenly when he saw the looks in the eyes of the rest. "I don't know. Perhaps you're right after all," he finished lamely.

"Of course, I'm right," Larry drove his point home. "Satan's psychology is that of a ruthless criminal. Oh, I know! He doesn't like crime. He paints fancy labels on it. Espionage, he calls it. Selling out to the highest bidder and such bunk! But coming right down to it, doesn't Hitler call his crimes—and they are plain, dirty crimes—by fancy names? Essentially, Satan's mind works like that of a fascist. He may be an American—or an Englishman," Larry added, turning toward Captain Sutton. "Or a German. But his is a fascist mind."

"I think Larry has hit the nail on the head," Bell said. "I've been studying the fascist breed for a good many years. I've written about them in my column—"

"And made yourself the most hated newspaper man among the Bundists," Pearson added.

"By his enemies you shall know him," Bell replied. "But Larry has Satan's number. The fascist mind enjoys nothing better than kicking someone who's down. Renalt is made to order for Satan. He's probably congratulating himself right now that he's bought safety so cheaply."

"To quote a well-known statesman, 'Peace in our time'—or have we forgotten that so soon," Larry asked.

Captain Sutton flushed. "It was a mistake, Donald, we all

regret. And I think we've paid for that mistake rather heavily."

"I'm sorry, Captain," Larry said. "I didn't mean to rub it in. God knows, we've been just as stupid in some of the things we did. I only want to emphasize that it's very easy to fall into the belief that one can buy off a cold-blooded killer. Renalt's daughter will be kidnapped and held for more ransom. If we act on that now—before Satan makes his plans and sends us his usual letter, we might trap him."

"I'm for action, sir," Captain Sutton said, standing up. He looked down at the others, waiting. "What do you say to paying a visit to Mr. Renalt's residence?"

"I'm all for it," Bell said. "It's early yet and we can catch him before dinner."

"We can give as an excuse that we're checking up on his phone call since it might have been made by Satan," Pearson mused thoughtfully. "Yes, I think that would be the best approach."

"Heaven knows, no one could imitate that voice," Larry remarked as they filed out of the office.

They descended the stairs and climbed into Bell's car which was parked at the curb. Pearson had sent a towtruck after the sedan abandoned in Long Island. They sped uptown to Park Avenue. There they turned into one of the streets in the lower fifties and stopped before a large apartment house. Renalt occupied the penthouse suite there. He had a private elevator into which they crowded.

When the car stopped, a big, raw-boned servant was waiting. A signal had informed him that the elevator was bringing up visitors. Pearson gave him his name and asked for Renalt. The servant left silently and went into the library. They heard Renalt's voice booming from inside.

"What is it, Ivan?" Renalt shouted. There was a moment of quiet, then Renalt's voice was heard again. "You've been with me a week, Ivan, and you still haven't learned that I never see anyone before dinner. You Russians! Can't you ever learn? Tell him I'm not in!"

The servant came back, treading noiselessly on the expen-

sive carpeting. He nodded his head slightly and announced that Mr. Renalt was not in.

"But I just heard him!" Pearson exploded.

Larry thought he caught a slight suggestion of a smile on Ivan's face. Evidently this Russian was not as stupid as he had led Renalt to believe. He had a shrewd pair of dark, sharp eyes in his head. In the brief moment that he had seen them come out of the elevator, Larry felt, the Russian had quickly and efficiently catalogued each one of them.

The servant's eyebrows lifted. "I can't say about that, Mr. Pearson," he said. He spoke in perfect English with no trace of an accent. "But Mr. Renalt is not in." He began to close the door slowly.

Pearson straight-armed the slowly moving door open. Ivan stepped back, a hurt expression on his face.

"But Mr. Renalt is not—"

"He is to me," Pearson interrupted, striding into the room. The others followed him in.

Renalt had heard the scuffle at the door. He was standing in the doorway of the library as Pearson came up to him. Evidently, he was not happy about his visitors. He glared at Pearson. Behind Renalt, a plump girl of about 25 watched the group.

Renalt turned to her. "Wait for me inside, Barbara," he said.

"No, just a moment, Miss Renalt," Pearson broke in. "You are Miss Barbara Renalt, aren't you?"

"Yes, this is my daughter, Pearson," Renalt answered for her. He closed the library door and stepped into the corridor. "You have no right to break into my home like this," he boomed at Pearson.

"Sorry, but I have my duty to perform. There are several questions I want you to answer, Mr. Renalt."

"I'll answer no questions—"

"You'll answer these, Renalt!" Pearson snapped. "Or I'll have a warrant out for your arrest in half an hour!"

"You wouldn't dare!" Renalt roared. "I'm not a man to be pushed—"

"Wouldn't I?" Pearson retorted. "Neither you nor anyone else can obstruct justice! Get that into your fat head!" Pearson was boiling mad. "Now let's go somewhere where you can answer my questions. And be quick about it!"

Renalt threw a venomous look at Pearson. Then he turned to Ivan who had been standing quietly to one side.

"Take these gentlemen into my private study, Ivan. I'll join you in a moment," he added to Pearson. "I want to speak to my daughter for a moment."

"All right," Pearson answered, turning to Ivan. "Lead on."

Ivan showed them down the corridor to a heavy oak door. He swung it open and stepped in ahead of them. He snapped on the lights, then waited beside the door as they came in.

"Make yourselves at home, gentlemen," he said. There was a hint of laughter in his eyes as they met Pearson's gaze. When they had all entered, he went away, closing the door quietly behind him.

"Queer fish, that Russian, what?" Captain Sutton remarked as he examined the paintings on the wall, strolling about the room.

The others looked over the books and various bric-a-brac that filled the room. The furniture was expensive, garish.

"His tastes are as heavy as he is," Jon said as he looked the place over.

They didn't have long to wait. In a few minutes the door opened and Renalt came in, scowling.

"It's only your threat to have me arrested that makes me see you," Renalt began.

"Never mind that now," Pearson stopped him. "How did you pay that twenty thousand to Satan?"

"That's my business," Renalt replied. "My instructions were explicit—and I'm not supposed to talk about it any further. As far as the case is concerned, I'm out of it. I have no connections—"

"You're not out of it," Pearson said. "Your daughter is in greater danger now than she was before you paid Satan the money."

"Nonsense!" Renalt lumbered across the room and sat down at his desk.

"You don't think Satan is going to let you go, do you?" Pearson argued. "Twenty thousand is small change to you—and Satan knows it! And the fact that you paid off so easily the first time—" Pearson stopped suddenly. He was staring at Renalt in amazement.

A deathly pallor had come over Renalt. His eyes seemed to pop right out of the sockets. He was staring at an envelope lying on the desk before him.

"What's the matter?" Bell asked.

"This—this envelope," Renalt gasped. "How did it get here?" He stared in turn at each of the men in the room. All eyes were fixed on the envelope lying on Renalt's desk. "How—how did it get here?" Renalt asked weakly.

"Isn't it yours?" Larry asked. He didn't have to ask the question. He had already read the answer in the frightened man's eyes.

"It's just like—like the other envelope I got from Satan," Renalt said.

"Maybe you'll realize the truth of what I've been trying to make you understand sooner than you expect," Pearson remarked. He stepped to the desk and picked up the envelope. Quickly he tore it open and read the short note inside. Then he looked up.

"It's from Satan," Pearson said. "You were one hundred percent correct, Larry."

Larry took the note from Pearson's hand. He read it out to the others.

My Dear Mr. Renalt:

Thank you for delivering the twenty thousand dollars on schedule. You will forgive me, I'm sure, for not mentioning the fact that it was merely a first payment on the total that you will eventually have to pay me. The next installment shall consist of one hundred thousand dollars. Further instructions will be left at the time I come to take your daughter away.

Sincerely yours,
Satan II.

"I don't believe it!" Renalt exploded. He charged from be-

hind his desk and snatched the letter out of Larry's hand. He read it over and over again. Perspiration began to sparkle on his forehead. He turned with a helpless look toward Pearson.

"My God!" he groaned. "You've got to help me, Pearson. You've got to!" He sank into an easy chair, weakly.

"We'll do all we can, Renalt," Pearson said. "I'll have a guard placed here in your home at once!"

"Pearson," Captain Sutton said. "Until your men come here, I'd like a favor from you."

"What is it?"

"Permit me to stay here for the night. I want a crack at this Satan and so far all I've been doing is sort of following your lead, you know."

"Okay, Captain," Pearson replied. "I've got to get back to headquarters. And Larry and Jon aren't quite equipped to be in charge here. You take over, then."

"Right-o!" Captain Sutton grinned. Then turning to Bell, he said, "We British make mistakes—but we'll also take the rap . . . as you Americans say." He had suddenly grown very cheerful.

Pearson shook his head. "You've got a job on your hands, Captain," he said. "I don't think Satan will strike tonight—but if he does . . ." Pearson didn't finish his sentence. He shook his head and the gesture was expressive enough for all of them.

"Don't worry, old boy," Sutton replied. "I'll handle this Satan blighter in the good old Scotland Yard manner. That I will!"

As they were leaving the room, Larry caught sight of a figure slipping around the corner of the corridor. A second later, Ivan came toward them from the same direction. His face was calm and unexpressive.

"Did you see anyone as you came down the hall, Ivan?" Larry asked.

"Some one in the corridor, sir?" Ivan answered, raising his eyebrows in a questioning way. "I'm afraid not, sir."

"For a moment I thought—" Larry rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Never mind, Ivan." He turned to go to the elevator,

then stopped. "By the way, Ivan, what is your second name?"

"Ivan Ivanovitch Kallenikoff," Ivan replied. "Is there anything else, sir?"

"You are Russian?"

"Yes, sir."

Larry joined the others waiting for him in the elevator. They rode down in silence.

In the street, they separated. Pearson took a cab down to the Federal Building. Bell dropped Larry at his home. Before he drove off to make his round of the night clubs, he turned to Larry, leaning out of the car window.

"I see you noticed the servant," Bell said. "He was a Russian."

"Yes," Larry replied. "Also, I heard Renalt mention the fact that Ivan had been in his employ for only a week."

"I heard that, too," Bell spoke after a moment's silence.

They looked at each other. Both were thinking of the same thing. The dead man in the road and the last words he said before he died.

"Fits in with Tucker's statement," Bell said. "If the man you found was Tucker, that is."

Larry nodded. "The Russian," he said softly. "I think we've found him. But how does he fit into the picture?"

"He could be Satan," Jon laughed. "But personally I doubt it."

"You suspect someone?"

"Everyone," Jon replied. "And now I'm going off to watch a bunch of useless morons gallivant about the night clubs and write something that will tickle the ones who didn't go out to the same spots." He shook his head. "But I still like this job better than any I've had before."

"You may not like my novels," Larry said, "but I must admit your column has exposed a lot of these phonies who trade on patriotism and sell out to the enemies of our country. Some day they're going to get a hold of you, Jon."

"They've already tried, Larry. I've been attacked more than once, you know. I don't expect them Yorkville Nazis to like

what I write about them. And I'm prepared." He lifted a flap in the car seat and showed Larry the gun he carried there. "Well, I've got to get going. Sure you don't want to come along and hit a few of the high spots with me?"

"No, I've got a lot of thinking to do. I can do it better without your silly chatter banging away at my ears."

Bell shifted the gears in his car. In a moment, he turned the corner and was gone. Larry stood on the sidewalk for a few minutes, fingering the keys to Bell's apartment. He was tempted to take a cab and go over to the Henderson home. He wanted to see Arline Henderson again. It would be fun seeing her again. But this was hardly the time. He had to think out some of the confusing information that was slowly piling up in his head.

He went up to Bell's apartment and undressed. For a long time, he sat by the window, smoking his pipe in the semi-darkness. It was getting late and he was beginning to feel sleepy. He had revolved all that he knew over and over again and didn't seem to get much out of it.

Satan was everywhere and nowhere. There was no doubt in Larry's mind that somehow Satan was getting complete reports of what went on inside Pearson's office. But where was the leak? Perhaps a microphone had been planted in Pearson's office? He crossed the room and picked up the phone to call Pearson. But he put it down again. Too many of the plans were made outside that office—but Satan still knew about them.

And then that letter in Renalt's study. It could have been lying there for sometime before they discovered it. Or the Russian servant could have placed it when he entered the room. Larry remembered that the Russian had walked in ahead of them to put on the lights. He could have tossed it on the desk in the dark. Then he shook his head, hopelessly. The desk was too far from the door. The Russian could not have done that then. But he could have placed the letter on the desk before they arrived.

In fact, Larry realized, they had all moved about that room pretty much before Renalt came in. Captain Sutton could

have dropped that letter on the desk. Or Jon Bell or Pearson himself.

"I better go to sleep," Larry said aloud. "I'm beginning to suspect the FBI chief of being Satan. Pretty soon I'll suspect even myself."

He lay in bed for a while unable to go to sleep because of the turmoil in his mind. Then, with the image of Arline Henderson floating before his eyes, he dropped off to sleep.

●

It seemed but a few minutes later that he felt some one shaking him by the shoulder. He turned and opened his eyes. Jon Bell was bending over him.

"Get up, Larry! There's hell breaking loose!"

In an instant, Larry was out of the bed and struggling into his clothes. Bell lighted a cigarette and began to pace the floor.

"What's up, Jon?"

"Satan has been in action again!"

"Is it Barbara Renalt?" Larry asked.

"Kidnapped," Jon replied.

"What about Captain Sutton?"

"I don't know," Jon said. "He may be dead. Satan or his men were not very gentle with him. He got quite a workout. The doctor was looking him over when Pearson called me."

"When was that?"

"A few minutes ago," Jon explained. "I had just come in when the phone rang. Pearson was on the wire calling from the Renalt place. Captain Sutton had been attacked. They found him lying unconscious in a closet. Barbara was gone. He wants us to come right over."

By this time, Larry had dressed. Together they dashed down the stairs to Bell's car. As they drove away, Jon said quietly, "If Satan actually has gone after Renalt to get more dough out of him—he'll probably go after Henderson again."

Larry froze up inside. For the first time, he really felt fear creeping down his spine. He didn't like the feeling.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RUSSIAN

RENALT WAS FAST APPROACHING A STATE OF COLLAPSE WHEN Larry and Jon arrived at the penthouse. Pearson was pacing the floor angrily, his face grim.

"Right under our noses!" Pearson was muttering. He turned to Larry as he came in. "What took you two so long?"

"We came as fast as we could, Earl," Jon explained. "Where's Captain Sutton?"

Pearson jerked his head toward a door in the rear. "The doctor is fixing him up now."

"How badly was he hurt?" Larry asked.

"I haven't talked to him yet," Pearson replied. He motioned toward some chairs. "Sit down and I'll tell you all I know." He paid no attention to Renalt who sat with his head buried in his hands.

"When did it happen?" Larry asked.

"About an hour ago. At least, it was discovered then." Pearson glanced at his wrist watch. "It's four-thirty now."

Bell sat down and crossed his legs. For all his nervous tension, he appeared to be the most calm of them all. He took out a pack of cigarettes and extended it first toward Pearson, then to Larry. Both shook their heads. Bell shrugged his shoulders and lighted one for himself.

"Let's have the story, Earl," he said.

"We'll get Captain Sutton's part from him in a few minutes. I questioned everybody here. None of the servants heard anything. It seems they had all retired."

"The Russian?" Larry asked.

Pearson looked at him steadily for a moment. "Yes, he had gone to sleep, too. Mr. Renalt discovered that his daughter was missing about that time . . . three-thirty."

Renalt raised his head at the sound of his name. He stared at them blankly for a while. Then, "I was worried," he said.

"I couldn't sleep. Finally I got up and went into Barbara's room. She was gone."

Pearson nodded. "Right under our noses," he said bitterly. "We had all the necessary warnings and plenty of time. And Satan still made fools of us. Me in particular."

"I wonder if Satan acted in his usual way," Larry ventured. "I've got a hunch that somehow we forced his hand."

"What do you mean?" Jon Bell asked, starting.

"I mean Satan took a chance in kidnapping Barbara Renalt that he ordinarily would not take. Captain Sutton—"

"You may be right," Pearson interrupted. After a moment's thought, he went on. "Satan doesn't like to leave witnesses. Remember what he did to those two guards. They were close to him and might have recognized him again. He killed them."

"But he didn't kill Captain Sutton," Jon poined out. "He slipped up there."

"Exactly," Larry continued. "He had to make hurried plans because for the first time we anticipated his move before we received his usual warning."

The door behind them opened and Captain Sutton came in, helped by the Russian servant. The doctor was close behind them. The Russian helped Sutton to a chair, then went to one side and waited.

"My head feels like I've been having a wild spree," Captain Sutton said, making a painful effort to smile.

"You received quite a hard blow, Captain," the doctor said. "But you'll be all right."

"Dashed blighters!" Sutton cursed. "I never had a chance to do a thing against them."

"Let's have your story, Captain," Pearson said. "You may provide the clue we're looking for. Did you see what the men looked like?"

"I didn't see a dashed thing," Captain Sutton replied. "Nothing but some very interesting fireworks."

Pearson got up and began to pace the floor impatiently. He stopped and stared at Sutton. "Give us the details, Captain."

"Well, now, it must have been close to three-thirty. A few

minutes give or take, you know. I was in the library when I heard a peculiar sound. Couldn't quite make out what it was. It might have been the flapping of wings or something scratching against a door. There was also a peculiar smell." He closed his eyes and leaned back for a few minutes while the others watched him closely. "Like the smell of a match when it doesn't quite light up—"

"Sulphur?" Jon Bell asked, raising his eyebrows, a smile on his face.

"Something like that," Captain Sutton answered. "This blasted Satan is now going in for stage effects. Or perhaps he was just playing pranks on me. At any rate, I went out in the corridor and thought I'd look around. No one was in there. The lights were turned down for the night. It was dashed queer, I say, walking through that corridor in a dim light, with the shadows jumping out at one from all those antiques and what-not that clutter up this place. But I didn't see anyone as I walked along. When I got to about the end of the corridor—I believe Miss Renalt's door is just about there—I felt a pair of hands suddenly grip me from behind. By jove, the blighter must have been a powerful man! I'm no slouch myself—but he held me in a grip of iron. Then I felt a great noise suddenly explode inside my head. I didn't quite lose consciousness then. I remember a door opening in front of me. Then the wall suddenly flew into my face. And that was about all. When I woke up, I found myself in a dark closet. I banged on the door until Ivan, here, opened it and let me out."

"You have no idea of who the men were?" Pearson asked, pleadingly. "Not a glimpse of them?"

"As a matter of fact, I don't even know how many there were," Captain Sutton said, shaking his head. "Sorry, old chap. I guess I fumbled this one."

"Well, there's one more thing," Pearson began. "This note our friend Satan left for us. I'll read it to you."

Renalt looked up at him. "I—I'd rather—" he stammered. "I'm going to meet Satan's demand. I can't risk my daughter's life with this fiend. I don't care how much it's going to cost me."

"You'll have your chance, Renalt," Pearson said. He handed the letter over to the others. They grouped together to read it.

My Dear Mr. Renalt:

I have, as I promised you, taken custody of your daughter Barbara. She will be returned unharmed if you follow my instructions to the letter.

Place $100,000 in small denomination bills in a brown paper bag. Give this bag to Larry Donald and have him leave it beside the elevated highway pillar directly opposite pier 53 on West Street. He is to leave it there at exactly midnight and leave. You may notify Pearson. But I will stand for no interference. You cannot stop me!

Sincerely yours,
Satan II.

"The bounder has his nerve, what?" Captain Sutton remarked.

"You intend to pay?" Pearson asked Renalt.

"Yes, if Mr. Donald agrees to take the money as directed," Renalt said weakly. "What else can I do? Satan is too much even for the FBI and—" he cast an angry look at Sutton—"and for a special agent of the British Secret Service. I'm licked."

"I'll do it, Mr. Renalt," Larry said feeling sorry for the huge man. "I'll pick the money up later in the day."

Ivan opened the door for them as they started to leave. It was then that Larry realized that the Russian had been in the room all the time. He made a note of that for future reference, but said nothing.

When they got to Pearson's office in the Federal Building, Jeffry Lane was waiting for them with a stack of papers. He placed them on Pearson's desk and waited. Pearson brushed them aside.

"Better have a look at them now, Chief," Lane said. "They're the latest batch of reports from the shortwave."

Pearson glanced at them. "Send them down to the code room."

Lane picked one sheet up. "Take a look at this one, Chief. It came over the Berlin radio. I brought it in because there was something queer. We were listening to the regular propaganda beamed to America, when there was some kind of electrical disturbance. Static cut in on the speaker, almost drowning him out."

"Static?"

"Yes," Lane continued. "But the static came in dots and dashes."

"What did you get?" Pearson asked.

"That's it," Lane replied pointing to the paper on the desk.

Pearson picked it up and stared puzzled. The note contained a series of letters.

BB-AE-DD AB-AE-CA-CA DC-CD-CD-CC BD-CB-CE-CD-DB-DD-AA-CC-DD DB-AE-CE-CD-DB-DD BA-CD-DB CB-AA-BD-CD-DB CE-CA-AA-CC-DC DC-AA-DD-AA-CC.

Pearson stared at the letters, then silently passed it on to the others. They in turn shook their heads.

Lane said, "I tried to break it down myself while you were away, but couldn't."

"Take it down to the boys," Pearson directed. "They'll crack it if anyone can."

When Lane stepped out of the room, Pearson turned to them. "I don't know what we can do until Barbara Renalt has been returned. I don't want to risk her life unnecessarily."

"We'll just have to wait," Jon said. "And if it's all the same with you, I'll enjoy catching up on my sleep until then. How about you, Larry?"

"I'll come along," Larry said.

"Remember, Larry, you're going to be on your own tonight. Don't try anything funny—"

"It's not a laughing matter," Larry replied. "I appreciate that much about the situation."

"You know what I meant," Pearson continued. "Don't try to solve this case on your own. Remember what happened to Captain Sutton! There will be no more individualists on this case. You may not be as lucky as the captain."

"I say, I didn't think I was so lucky. My head still aches!" the captain protested.

"I get you, Pearson. I'll be careful."

As Larry and Bell walked out, they heard Captain Sutton saying, "I think I'll run along home. I've got a deuce of a headache, you know."

Early that evening, Larry appeared at the Renalt home. They were all waiting for him when he arrived. Renalt had the money neatly stacked on his desk.

"I had a little trouble raising this cash on such short notice, but I finally managed it." He seemed almost happy about the affair. The weakness that had seized him after the discovery of the kidnapping had disappeared.

"I suppose you've counted it?" Larry asked. Renalt nodded and began to put the money into the bag. He fingered the crisp bills lovingly.

When he had finished, he handed the brown paper bag over to Larry. The others looked on in silence. Finally Pearson glanced at his watch.

"You better get started if you're going, Larry," Pearson said. "Come on, I'll drive you down in my car." He turned to Renalt. "You stay home and wait. If Satan works the way he did with Arline Henderson, your daughter will probably be picked up somewhere around here and brought straight home. I've ordered the police in this neighborhood to watch for abandoned automobiles."

"Where—where will you be?" Renalt asked. He was becoming nervous again.

"Take it easy," Pearson advised. "After I drop Larry near enough to the waterfront for him to walk to Pier 53, I'm going direct to my office. Call me as soon as Barbara is brought home. And you, Larry," he turned to the group walking toward the door, "report to me as soon as you leave the money."

"Right, Earl," Larry replied. He was feeling pretty good about the mission. At last he was doing something on his own. Somehow, he had felt hampered with the shrewd, hard FBI man constantly at his elbow. He had no intention of leaving the scene after the money was placed according to Satan's directions. But he wasn't talking about his plans. Not just yet.

Pearson dropped him off at Tenth Avenue and drove away without a word. Jon Bell called out to him as the car disappeared down the block.

"Good luck, Larry!"

Larry watched the darkness swallow the speeding car away. He looked at his own watch and noticed that it was close to midnight. He turned and hurried down the deserted street.

There was an eerie silence about the waterfront at night. The elevated highway loomed darkly over West Street. Not a light appeared in any of the windows facing the piers. Larry felt an oppressive silence beating down upon him. West Street was completely deserted. The heavy traffic crowding along the street during the day was missing. The stores were closed. Only one saloon about a block away was open. Harsh, jangling music drifted out of it. Larry stopped and listened. He glanced about him to see if he was followed. But he couldn't tell. The buildings and the street down which he came was shrouded in shadow.

Somewhere, far off, a whistle hooted, then another answering one. The sounds were gone in a moment and the silence seemed deeper for the momentary disturbance.

Larry walked along the sidewalk opposite the piers until he came to pier 53. He glanced to left and right. No one was in sight. He was about to start across toward the row of dark pillars under the elevated highway when something caught his eye. He didn't know what it was, but the momentary distraction made him pause. A queer feeling that he was being watched came over him.

He wondered if Satan was somewhere near him at that moment. He would have liked to come face to face with this killer. He watched the shadows across the street. No one was hiding near the piers. Yet there was something that had caught his eye, some movement of a shadow darker than the surrounding blackness. He turned in all directions, looked under the elevated highway, into the dark, gloomy doorways. Nothing moved. Nothing disturbed the silent, immovable darkness.

He shifted the bag in his hand and began to cross the street. He walked gingerly, not knowing just what to expect. But he was prepared for any surprise. Nothing happened. He found the pillar directly opposite pier 53. For a moment he thought

that the gate of the dock was open and someone was watching him from there. He stared hard in the direction. When his eyes became more accustomed to the darkness, he saw the gates were tightly closed. He couldn't stall much longer. He placed the paper bag at the base of the pillar, turned and started back. He didn't glance behind him. But his ears were keenly alert for the least sound.

There was no sound behind him. He was tempted to go back and pick up the money, but he resisted the temptation. He reached the sidewalk and walked casually toward the corner. The feeling that someone was watching him became stronger. But he made no effort to probe deeper into the darkness. He reached the corner and turned.

But he did not walk far up the block. He took a dozen steps, walking diagonally so that he soon merged with the shadows near the wall of the building. There he stopped and waited, listening. After a moment, he turned and began to creep slowly along the wall of the building. At the corner, he almost tripped over a broken crate. Carefully he stepped around it.

Just beyond the edge of the building, on West Street was a large garbage can. Larry dropped to his hands and knees and crawled to it. He hid behind it and waited. Nothing moved. Not a sound disturbed the deep stillness around him. He was just about to raise his head to peer out toward the elevated highway when his ear caught the soft scrape of a shoe on the sidewalk. Someone had shifted his position.

Larry waited, holding his breath. He listened, all his nerves tightening with the tension. There it was again, the unmistakable sound of someone moving about. He froze in his cramped position, trying to place the direction from which the sound came.

Again someone moved in the dark. Larry turned halfway. Whoever it was, he was standing in the shadow of one of the doorways just a few feet away from him.

Larry dared not make a move. He remained crouched, wondering if the man was aware of his presence. If that was Satan, Larry thought, this could be the end of the trail. Then he

remembered Captain Sutton's description of the great strength of the man who had seized him. It could be his own end, too. Larry flexed his muscles. He'd put up a fight, anyway. He wondered if this was going to be a contest of waiting. Well, he knew he could outwait any man, even Satan.

But he did not have to wait long. Evidently the man hiding in the shadows did not know Larry was there. As Larry watched carefully from behind the garbage can, he saw a dark figure detach itself from the shadows. The man moved slowly, looking up and down the street. The collar of his coat was turned up. A low-brimmed hat was pulled down over his eyes.

The man started to cross the street toward the elevated highway. Far down the street, Larry saw a pair of headlights approaching. The man saw them, too. He started to cross the street quickly.

But Larry moved faster. With a leap, he dived at the man's feet and tackled him. There was a grunt and the man fell forward, whirling about and kicking at the same time. The kicks broke Larry's grip around the man's legs. He tried to scramble to his feet, but the man had turned and reached out toward him. The man had a gun in his hand. Larry made a grab for it.

"*Doorack!*" the man hissed angrily.

He swung at Larry, trying to hit him with the barrel of the gun. Larry ducked. As the arm flew over his head, he butted the man in the stomach. The man grunted and fell back a step. His hat fell off. Larry stared at him in amazement.

It was Ivan Kallenikoff, Renalt's Russian servant!

CHAPTER EIGHT

DEATH IN A DOORWAY

LARRY WAS STUNNED. HE STOPPED AND STARED AT THE RUSSIAN.

"You!" he said, amazed. "You are Satan!"

The momentary pause gave the Russian a chance to recover

his balance. Swiftly he glanced up the street toward the approaching headlights. The car was speeding toward them.

"Fool!" Ivan exclaimed, leaping at Larry.

Larry swung and caught the Russian on the point of his chin. The Russian stopped, shook his head to clear it. Then with a roar he charged at Larry, driving him back toward the sidewalk. Larry's foot caught at the curb and he fell over backward. The Russian had his gun out. He pointed it at Larry.

"Get back against the wall, you fool!" he hissed.

Larry scrambled to his feet. He held his hands high as he backed away. Ivan glanced again toward the approaching car.

"Stand against the wall and don't interfere, if you want to live!" the Russian warned.

Larry backed up until his foot touched the crate lying against the side of the building. He stepped over it carefully, placing it between him and Ivan. Then he leaned against the wall, hooking his foot in the crate at the same time.

Ivan glanced at the two headlights. The car had turned under the elevated highway, heading for pier 53. It was slowing down.

"Listen, Donald," Ivan began, "You can help me—"

He never finished that sentence. Larry's foot shot up, smashing the crate into Ivan's face. Larry leaped over the Russian's body and dashed toward the car, waving his hands. He was about to cry out when he noticed the car stop before the pillar where he had placed the money.

A dark figure stepped out of the car. A searchlight picked out the brown bag lying near it. A hand reached out and picked the money up. A moment later, the figure had stepped back into the waiting auto and sped away. But in the brief second as the man had turned, his light fell on the car's license plates. Larry saw familiar numbers. Again it was 3K-7. And again he missed reading the rest. With a burst of speed, the black sedan vanished into the distance.

Larry turned to the Russian, but he was no longer lying on the ground. Down the block, a black shadow was racing toward a parked car.

Larry ran after him. The Russian jumped into a car and with a clash of gears roared away after the black sedan.

"Trick knee or no trick knee!" Larry cursed, "I'm going to run after them!"

His former training came in good stead. He set off at a distance eating lope. He had no hopes of catching the speeding cars. But he did want to keep those tail-lights in sight as long as he could. Down West Street Larry raced, keeping Ivan's lights in sight. His thoughts raced through his head faster than his feet covered the ground.

"The Russian is not Satan," Larry thought. "Who is he then? What does he have to do with this case? What was he doing here on the dock? Why did he attack me?"

Then he realized that the Russian had not attacked him. He had tackled Ivan before the man had a chance to explain. But it was obvious that Ivan was up to no good, Larry thought. At the least, he probably intended to grab the ransom money for himself.

By this time Larry reached a point near Little West 11th Street. He was ready to give up. His breath was coming in laborious gasps. But just as he was about to stop, he saw Ivan's car turn off West Street. He was still several blocks away.

"I can't give up now," Larry moaned. "Got to finish this! Got to!" It was just like his days in college. He couldn't help thinking of the time he broke the mile record at the State championships. He had been ready to drop from exhaustion as he turned into the home stretch. But something kept saying inside of him, "Another step! Another step!" And he had kept on running.

Now he said to himself the same thing, and kept on running until he reached the corner. He turned, out of breath. But there was no car ahead of him. He stood in the middle of the street and stared, gasping to catch his breath. The black sedan and Ivan's car had disappeared.

"I should have not tried to run at all," Larry said to himself. He walked up the block slowly, drawing the cool night air deep into his lungs.

A car was parked just ahead of him. He walked by it slowly. On an impulse, he turned and felt the hood. It was warm. There was no one in sight. He walked around the car, studying it. He checked the license. Number 3-K-7. It could be the Russian's. He really had no chance to look at it. Besides it was dark. But the hood was warm. Evidently its engine had been racing a short time ago.

Larry stared at the dark buildings that lined the street. The door of the house where the car was parked was partly open. He walked up the block. All the doors were tightly closed. It could be the place where the owner of the car had gone. The man might have been in the street at the time the two cars dashed by. Perhaps the man had noticed the license number of at least one of them. They were certainly speeding. But how to find the man. Larry glanced up at the windows. Not a light showed.

He peered past the partly open door. The hallway was in pitch darkness. It was a building used for small factories, each floor having at least one. The man could have gone into any one of them. Or he could have gone into another building.

Still, Larry hated to give up the chase. He pushed open the door and stepped in. Darkness enveloped him. He stretched out his hand and groped for the wall. In a moment, his fingers touched the woodwork. He stopped and listened for any sound. The place was in silence. Not a board creaked. He began to inch forward, feeling foolish. Another wildgoose chase, he was saying to himself.

Suddenly his hand touched something. It was a handle sticking out toward him. Unconsciously his hand gripped it. It moved slightly. His fingers found the handle fitted nicely into his grasp.

Then, with a shock, he realized that his hand had closed over the handle of a knife. He drew back. Something black, darker than the surrounding darkness, wavered. A second later a heavy body fell on him.

He grappled with it wildly, bringing his knee up to hit the man in the groin. But the man was strangely inanimate. Larry

stepped back. There was a thud in front of him. Then silence again. He reached his foot out and touched the body. The man did not move.

Larry pulled a box of matches out of his pocket and lighted one. Holding it high over his head, he turned the body over on its back.

He gasped, dropping the match. It was Ivan again. But this time he was dead.

Larry lighted another match and studied Ivan's face. There was no doubt that he was dead. The whites of his eyes reflected the flickering light of the match. For a moment, Larry did not know what to do. Leave him lying there? Call Pearson? He realized that he had placed a perfect set of his fingerprints on the handle of the knife. If he left, the police would undoubtedly trace him and he would be faced with a charge of murder.

He lighted another match and turned Ivan over on his face again. He wiped the handle of the knife with his pocket handkerchief. Closing the door behind him, Larry stepped out into the street. Glancing up and down the block, he found that the street was still deserted. Murder had been committed, but no one seemed to care. The world was asleep. He walked toward Tenth Avenue, feeling that he would have a better chance of finding a phone there.

A saloon was open on the corner. Larry stepped in and asked if there was a phone. The sleepy bartender pointed toward the back. But as Larry walked by him, the man started.

"What happened to you?" the bartender asked.

"Why, nothing," Larry replied.

"How'd you get all that blood over your jacket?"

Larry glanced down to find that his jacket had a good deal of blood smeared over it. He got that, he realized, when Ivan's body fell against him.

"Oh, that?" Larry replied, trying to smile, "I was just in an automobile accident."

He walked to the phone quickly, before the bartender had a chance to ask any more questions and dialed Pearson's number.

"Oh, it's you!" Pearson shouted as soon as Larry identified himself. "Where the hell have you been?"

"Never mind that," Larry said. "Is Barbara Renalt safe?"

"Yes, Renalt just called me up to say that she had been found sleeping in a parked car. The car was stolen, as in the Henderson business. Where are you?"

Larry told him. "Come right out here, Earl. Fast!" He hung up before Pearson could argue with him.

"Where can I wash up?" Larry called to the bartender.

The bartender jerked his thumb toward a door marked "Gents." Larry went in and washed himself. He tried to clean the blood from his jacket with a dirty old towel, but it wouldn't come off. After a while he came out and ordered a glass of beer.

"Waiting for some friends to pick me up," he explained to the bartender.

But the bartender was no longer interested. He was again dozing over the next day's paper, studying through half closed eyes the racing page.

When Pearson arrived, bringing Jon Bell along with him, Larry took him aside and told him what had happened. Pearson swore softly under his breath.

"I told you to come right back," Pearson said. "Now you've messed it up. And I'm sorry to see this Russian knocked off."

Pearson went to the phone and made several calls. "I just called the police," he explained coming back. "Now let's have a look."

Larry led him to the building. Pearson shot his flash into Ivan's face. He shook his head.

"Ivan was a damn good man," he said.

"You—you know him?" Larry asked.

"Yes," Pearson replied. "I know him."

"Who is he?" Bell asked. "The Russian Tucker was talking about?"

"I don't think so," Pearson explained. "Ivan Kallenikoff was one of the crack Russian Agents in this country!"

"He was a spy?" Larry asked, astonished.

"No. He was here on a special assignment. You see, the Russians knew about this War Syndicate being set up. They had

heard through their Secret Service about certain negotiations the Fascists and Nazis were having with the man who calls himself Satan. They found out that the center of the spy ring was to be located here in New York. They immediately tipped us off and sent one of their best men to work with us. That tip-off from the Russians, by the way, was one of the reasons my chief took those letters from Satan seriously right from the first. He had been expecting something of the sort."

"Then Ivan was waiting under the elevated highway to spot Satan when he came to pick up the ransom money!" Larry exclaimed. "I sure made a mess of things!"

"Well, it can't be helped now," Pearson said. "I was the only one who knew that Ivan was working on this case—I and the chief in Washington. You know, these Russians mean business when they get to work on something. They didn't want anyone to know unless it was absolutely necessary. And it wasn't necessary to let you two and Captain Sutton in on this."

In a few minutes, they heard a police siren wailing outside. The police car stopped and a cop jumped out.

"Pearson, FBI," Pearson said, flashing his papers in front of the officer. "You can take over now."

"Right," the policeman replied. He went inside to look at the body.

"Go home now and get some rest," Pearson directed Larry. "I want you in the office first thing tomorrow morning."

"Okay," Larry said.

Jon gave a yawn. "Hell," he said, "my work day is just beginning. I'm off to peek into a couple of keyholes."

CHAPTER NINE

A VISIT FROM SATAN

JEFFRY LANE WAS A CLEVER AND AMBITIOUS YOUNG MAN. FROM some ancestor, he had also inherited an innate shrewdness and a tendency to be close-mouthed. That was why the career that

opened before him in the FBI seemed so attractive. He was young, but a natural-born detective.

That was why he slipped into his pocket the piece of wire he had found outside the building that faced the Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company. It was lying directly under the window through which the FBI men led by him and Captain Sutton had watched the bank entrance. It did not seem to have any earthly connection with the bank robbery. But Lane was a detective almost by instinct. He picked it up for future reference.

When Pearson left for the Renalt home to send Larry out with the ransom money for Barbara Renalt, Lane remained sitting thoughtfully at his desk in the outer office. He was thinking of the amazing timing and organization executed by the bank robbers. Somehow, the more he thought of it, the more that half-foot of wire seemed to be connected with the affair. He took it out of his pocket and examined it. It told him nothing.

He locked up his desk and went down to the street, still fingering the wire in his pocket. Finally he made up his mind to go to the police laboratory. He flagged a cab and rode away.

A young engineer examined the wire for him. Lane watched him silently.

Finally the engineer looked up at him. "May I ask where you got this?"

Lane shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't tell you that."

"Well, it comes from a German radio set, one of those small, portable sets they make especially for the agents they parachute down behind our lines."

"You're sure of that?" Lane asked thoughtfully.

"Positive, though I don't know how you came to find this piece," the engineer said. "You know, those Nazi agents they landed in this country had two of the sets with them. I examined them. I couldn't make a mistake about it."

Lane frowned. How did this piece of wire get to the sidewalk in front of a building in which the FBI was lying in wait. It fitted in with Satan's schemes to set up a huge espionage ring,

of course, and Satan or his men were undoubtedly present at the robbery, but still . . . Lane rubbed the tip of his chin.

"I can tell you something else about this wire," the engineer went on. He pointed to the tips of the wire. "It wasn't cut off the rest of the wire, if that helps you."

"It wasn't?" Lane asked, absent-mindedly.

"No, it was ripped off by a strong pull. I can tell that from the uneven edges of the wire and the slight extension and elongation I saw under the microscope. Someone gave a strong pull, probably to disconnect the wires and this piece must have caught on something and was snagged off."

"You couldn't tell me from what direction the pull was made?" Lane asked, an idea beginning to form inside his brain.

"I'm afraid not," the engineer replied. "I've told you about all I can about this piece of wire. And a good deal of it was guess-work, you know. I can surmise certain things from the evidence—but it can be a lot harder than just saying it to provide proof. You understand that, don't you?"

"Yes," Lane replied, picking up the wire. "I'm in a somewhat similiar position." He thanked the engineer and went out. He rode in the subway to his midtown hotel.

His room was dark when he entered it. He didn't feel like putting on the lights. His room faced the back of the hotel, and Lane went over to the window and gazed down into the courtyard. Something was beginning to take shape in his mind, but he wasn't quite sure of himself yet. He didn't dare arrive at the startling conclusion that tantalized him, dancing vaguely, tauntingly in some hazy mist in his head.

As he stood there, he began to have an uncomfortable feeling that he was not alone in the room. His ears alert, he waited for the faintest sound. The easy chair behind him creaked softly. A man coughed quietly, as though reluctant to break in on his thoughts.

Lane whirled around. His eyes had become accustomed to the darkness. He saw the dim shape of a man sitting in the chair before him.

"Sorry to intrude on your thoughts," a whispering voice said. "But I am becoming rushed for time."

"Who are you?" Lane asked.

"Can't you guess?" the voice asked, chuckling.

"I'm not good at guessing," Lane answered. "Who are you?"

"Satan!" the voice replied. "Don't reach for a gun!" Satan added quickly.

"What do you want?" Lane asked. His hand slipped slowly toward the lapel of his coat. He carried his gun in a shoulder holster.

"That piece of wire you picked up after the bank robbery," Satan said. "I think you might get some ideas from it. And Satan likes to have control of all the elements that go into his cases."

"Piece of wire?" Lane asked, blankly. "I don't remember picking up any wire."

Satan laughed softly. "You underestimate me. Hand it over."

"All right," Lane said. His hand grasped the butt of his revolver. But before he could pull it out, Satan had leaped out of his chair. Lane was knocked over backward by the impact of the hurtling body. But he held on to the gun. Fingers of iron gripped his wrist, twisted it upward and back over his head. Satan was bending him over, backward. Lane gasped and tried to twist out of the hold.

They staggered across the room, bumping into the chair in which Satan had been sitting, then on toward the bed. With a shock, Lane realized that for all his training, he was powerless in the hands that held him. Slowly Satan pushed him toward the bed. Lane felt the edge of the bed against the back of his thighs. A moment later he had fallen backward with Satan on top of him.

There was a moment of silence in the room as the two bodies lay on the bed. Suddenly there was a gasp and a gurgling sound. One of the men arose, ran his hands through the pockets of the other. There was a savage chuckle as the man walked toward the door. He opened the door quietly, glanced

into the hallway, then stepped out and closed the door behind him. There was a faint echo of a chuckle in the corridor.

●

It was close to ten o'clock the next morning when Larry and Bell arrived downtown. Larry had stayed in the apartment while Bell made his usual round of the night clubs. Bell had hardly slept in the last few days and his face showed it plainly. Larry's mind had been so cluttered with the happenings of the night, that he tried to keep from thinking of the Satan episodes. Alternately, he had read and day dreamed through the night. When Bell arrived home, about six in the morning and dropped off to get a few hours rest, Larry had dressed and gone out for a walk in the morning air.

It didn't help to clear his mind much. But he felt sure that they were drawing in closer on Satan's trail. There was no longer the same sneering contempt in Satan's action. The kidnapping of Barbara Renalt and the murder of Ivan Kallenikoff had something hurried and unplanned about them. They were forcing Satan to act when he didn't want to. And to make swift, makeshift plans. That was a sign that Satan had somehow been knocked off balance. That way led to mistakes and Larry felt certain that sooner or later, Satan would make the fatal slip.

When he had returned from his walk, Bell was still sleeping and he let him rest. That was why they were late in arriving at Pearson's office.

Lane was not at his place in the outer office. A strange, heavy-set man was sitting in Lane's place. He glanced up at them when they arrived.

"You Bell and Donald?" the man asked.

They nodded and he motioned them on in. Larry stopped in the doorway looked back.

"Where's Lane?" he asked.

The man gave him a queer look. "Mr. Pearson will explain everything to you," he said. Then he bent over some papers on his desk.

Sutton, as usual, was seated in a chair by the door, his long

legs stretched out before him. His fingertips were pressed together, his gaze was fixed on some vague, absent-minded spot in the distance. He nodded to them as they came in, then resumed his thoughtful staring.

Pearson was on the phone.

"I know, I know," Pearson was saying. "I don't give a damn if they did say they were my men. The fact is that my men were all accounted for. Not one of them gone. Every man who stepped into the police cordon before the robbery was still there after we discovered the bank had been taken. The point is, commissioner, that your force let them through after I had given explicit orders that no one was to be allowed out. They should have found out if they were my men. And even then, if they had used their heads, they would not have let them through. Then this thing wouldn't have happened." Pearson stopped and listened, shaking his head.

"I'm not bawling you out, commissioner," he said. "And I don't want any bawlings out from you. If the city police can't cooperate more willingly with the Bureau, then something needs to be done about the police force. No one is to blame. Unfortunately, Satan knew exactly how I would act—and how your police would act given a certain situation. He depended on that and we fell into his trap. That's all there was to it!"

He banged the receiver down, noticed Larry and Bell and nodded to them. His face was grim.

"I can't stand these policemen who try to shift the blame on some one else's shoulders!" he exclaimed. "They're more interested in politics than law enforcement. Why the hell don't they call themselves politicians and be honest about it. The nerve of that guy trying to bawl me out."

"Sounded more like you were bawling him out, Earl," Jon Bell remarked, smiling.

Pearson gave him an angry look. "I don't feel much like exchanging wise cracks this morning," Pearson said. His eyes were screwed up into an angry squint.

"What happened?" Larry asked, realizing that something was wrong. "Is it the Russian's death?"

"In part," Pearson replied. "I don't like to lose a good man like Ivan. But there was something else happened last night." He paused and looked into the faces before him.

They waited tensely until Pearson's eyes had returned to the top of his desk.

"Jeffry Lane was murdered last night," he said, softly. "By Satan."

"Murdered!" Bell exclaimed.

"Yes," Pearson replied. He sat down in his chair and leaned his elbows on his desk, burying his face in his hands. "Jeff was one of my best boys," he added softly. "One of my best."

"How did it happen?" Larry asked.

"His throat was cut," Pearson said without looking up. "He failed to show up this morning and I phoned him. There was no answer so I sent Sparks over to find out what was the matter. Sparks found him all right—lying across the bed with his throat slit."

"I can't imagine why Satan went after Lane," Captain Sutton wondered. "We would have known if Lane had found a lead to Satan, wouldn't we?" He glanced shrewdly at Pearson. "Or is it possible that Lane was working on his own? Or like the Russian, without our knowledge?"

"If he was working on his own, I don't know anything about it," Pearson replied. "All I know is that the room was pretty well smashed up. Lane was no slouch and he must have put up quite a battle. Unfortunately, though some of the people heard the noise, no one thought it important to look into it. Satan was after something, that's definite. But I don't know what it was."

"How do you know he was looking for something Lane had?" Jon asked.

"Lane's pockets were turned inside out, showing that someone—Satan undoubtedly—had looked through them hurriedly."

"Say," Larry suddenly remembered, "I saw Lane pick something up from the street after the bank robbery. Perhaps that had something to do with it."

"What was it?" snapped Pearson.

"I don't know," Larry admitted. "He slipped it into his pocket before I caught more than a glimpse of it. It looked like a piece of string or a wire."

"That's odd," Pearson said. "He should have reported it to me." He was looking at Larry with a faint suspicion in his eyes.

"Anything else?" Bell asked. "You look like there's plenty more on your mind."

Pearson was silent, looking down at his desk and fingering the papers strewn over it. Larry thought he looked more like the man-hunter he was than he had ever seen him before. The air and manner of the successful young lawyer had vanished. Something hard had crept into him. The muscles of his jaws were working furiously. Larry could see the man was fighting hard to keep his temper from flaring up. And deep inside, Larry realized, Pearson was hurt and angry.

"I asked if there was anything else," Bell repeated. "Your face tells me there is, Earl. But why the hell do you keep your mouth shut?"

"I'm not so sure how much I can tell you from now on. Too many things that are said here become the property of Satan. And I wish to God I knew how he does it!"

"Perhaps you're thinking that one of us is Satan . . ." Captain Sutton suggested, leaving his sentence hanging unfinished, but with a strong hint that Pearson should finish the thought.

Pearson shrugged his shoulders. "I've always been willing to listen to suggestions from all of you," he said. "But I'm still running the show around here and you all damn well know it. By God—" he crashed his fist on the desk. "I'm going to get the louse that killed Lane if I have to tear this town apart to do it!"

"I know how you feel, Earl," Jon Bell said sympathetically, "and I don't blame you. But it's no reason for you to get suddenly stiff-neck about it. And take it out on your friends. We've known each other a long time, Earl. And Larry, here, was a big help yesterday. He took an awful chance trying to tackle Satan on his own. It didn't work, but he was ready to risk his

life. I think you can scratch both of us off your list right now."

"We learned one thing in Scotland Yard," Sutton drawled, "learned it many years ago. It doesn't do to lose one's temper, old boy. Sometimes one says rather rash things, you know. Makes nasty accusations and all that sort of thing." He glanced at Pearson with raised eyebrows.

"I'm sorry," Pearson said after a moment. "I liked Lane and the Russian. I guess I just blew my top for a minute. Forget it. But—" he turned toward Sutton, a smile beginning to show on his lips for the first time, "It's an old and good American custom to get fighting mad."

"Right-o," Sutton chuckled. "I appreciate your point, Pearson. But we don't act that way."

"Now that we understand each other," Pearson said. "There are a number of other things. In addition to picking up the ransom money, killing Ivan and Lane, Satan pulled off another little stunt. He—or some other person acting for him—entered my room while I was asleep. He stole my watch and bill fold containing my identification papers. That's rubbing it in for an FBI man."

"Are you sure it wasn't just a simple theft?" Bell asked.

"No, Satan took some trouble to make sure I would get the point. He took a piece of soap and wrote his name across my bathroom. And he left a note for me." Pearson pushed the note toward Bell.

Bell picked it up and read, " 'Please inform Captain Sutton that in spite of the bombs, he will be much safer in London. Air raid warnings are preferable to Satan's. One can take shelter from bombs but not from me. Satan warns only once.' It's signed in the usual way." Jon tossed the letter back to the desk.

"The blighter has his nerve, what?" Captain Sutton laughed. "I'm afraid he won't succeed in sending me back to London, though."

"The old English Bulldog in you, eh?" Larry laughed. "When will these people realize that they can't frighten us?"

"Right-o," Sutton added. "They can kill us, but they won't scare us."

Pearson shrugged his shoulders. "I'm glad Captain Sutton feels this way about it. If Satan succeeds in scaring him off, he would go after the rest of us."

"He's already trying it," said Sutton. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a watch and bill fold. He tossed it nonchalantly to the desk. "I believe this is yours?" he said.

"It is," Pearson cried, grabbing his things. "How did you get it, Captain?"

"It was beside my bed when I woke up this morning," he replied. "And a letter with it. Here it is." He handed it to Jon Bell. "I think you ought to read this. It concerns you, you know."

Jon Bell held the letter up so the others could read over his shoulder.

Dear Captain Sutton:

By this time, Mr. Pearson is well aware, I presume, of my visit to yourself and him, and of the unexpected demise of young Mr. Jeffrey Lane. I regret the good Lane's death, but it was necessary. I believe that my visit during the night will impress you with my ability to carry out any wishes I may have regarding you gentlemen. I believe I can soon dispense with your pleasant company, Captain Sutton, and have so informed Mr. Pearson. He will place the choice of returning to London before you.

I am also becoming bored with Mr. Bell. His column devotes almost as much space to attacking my friends from Yorkville as it does to the rather amusing antics of the Broadway set. I may also find it necessary to get rid of Mr. Donald, although it would be a shame to do away with so talented a writer (Mr. Bell's opinions to the contrary). He should limit his talents to the writing field and leave crime to men more fitted to the subject.

This is by way of letting you know that I have learned of your duplicity in failing to deposit Miss Henderson's ransom money as I had instructed you. Therefore I shall again take her into protective custody, to use a valuable phrase, and hold her until the $100,000 is forthcoming. If you try another holdout on me, she may turn up looking somewhat as Lane did. A hint to the wise . . .

Sincerely yours,
Satan II.

"Windy blighter," Captain Sutton said, but his face was serious. "But he does have a sense of humor."

"A rather gory one, though," Jon remarked dryly. "Not to my taste."

"The main thing is that Miss Henderson is in danger," Larry pointed out. "And we've got to do something about it."

"We're going to do something about it, Larry," Pearson said. "And I've picked you to do it."

CHAPTER TEN

A DATE WITH ARLINE

"WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?" LARRY ASKED PEARSON.

"I want you to date Arline up," Pearson said. Then he smiled. "That shouldn't be an unpleasant chore for you."

"If you ask me," Jon remarked, "Larry could have been the Satan who wrote that letter—just so that he could get near Miss Henderson."

"I don't see anything funny about this," Larry retorted. "Miss Henderson is in danger—deadly danger."

"Larry's right," Pearson said. "I want you to spend the evening at the Henderson home."

Jon laughed. "I thought you said a date, Earl. Here I was hoping to have some intelligent company while going around the night clubs and you send Larry off to Scarsdale."

"I want Arline Henderson to stay put in one place. And the best place for that would be her home. Larry, stick close and don't let her out of your sight." Then Pearson turned to Bell. "I wonder if you can talk your boss into inviting Larry to spend the night up there? Satan can and probably will strike sometime during the night. He's too smart to walk into a trap."

"You expect him up there?" Captain Sutton asked.

"Frankly, no," Pearson replied. "But I don't want him to get hold of Miss Henderson. This might be a way of keeping him out of Scarsdale."

"Not a bad idea. I don't think Miss Henderson would fare as well the second time, what?" Captain Sutton nodded thoughtfully.

"Can you do it, Jon?" Pearson asked.

Larry looked mutely at the columnist. His eyes were pleading. The look was not lost on Jon. He nodded slowly.

"I'll try," he promised. Then noticing the downcast look that came into Larry's face, he laughed and patted Larry's shoulder. "I'll fix it for you," he added. "I've got to go over to the paper now, so I'll talk the old man into it and phone you the results of my little conference." He left with a quick wink at Larry and a grin on his face.

An hour or so later, Bell called to tell Pearson that Henderson had put the stamp of approval on Larry's presence. He was to show up just after dinner that night.

"It seems that Arline likes the idea, too," Bell added before hanging up. "Slip that information to Larry, will you, Earl?"

To Larry, anxious for the evening to come, it was another of those unbearably long days. He went and had lunch with Pearson and then came back to sit and watch a meaningless bustle of activity around him. It brought home the point that police work was far more a monotonous grind than people realized. The detective novels he had read neglected to mention the endless checking up of every rumor, hint, possibility that always smothered a case. The work was essentially unexciting and he wondered if he could ever write a novel about such a set-up as Pearson's office really was.

But it was material and he drank it up, much as a child drinks milk which he does not like because his mother insists that it is good for him. Larry waited for the hours to pass, and wondered how Arline would look when he saw her that evening. How would she take it staying home for a change. Jon Bell's comments on her had led him to believe that she practically lived in night clubs. He wondered if that were true. Somehow he didn't think so. There was something clean and fresh about her, something open and sincere.

He smoked his pipe and stared with unseeing eyes out of the window. Captain Sutton had gone out earlier in the day and had not returned. No more was heard from Bell. He must have gone home to catch up on his sleep. In the evening, Larry went out with Pearson to nearby Chinatown and had a Chinese dinner. He would have enjoyed it immensely except that he was so conscious that the time was fast approaching for him to

start for Scarsdale. He wondered that a slim bit of a girl should make him so anxious.

A little after seven, they finished their dinner and stepped out of the restaurant into the narrow winding street. A car was waiting for them on the corner. Two of Pearson's men were sitting in it, watching the entrance of the restaurant. As soon as they came out, one of the men waved a hand to them.

As Larry started to get into the car, Pearson stopped him with a hand on his shoulder.

"Remember, Larry," Pearson advised. "This is not entirely a pleasant visit. She doesn't know that she is in great danger, and don't you let her catch wise to it. Also," he paused, "you may find yourself in danger before this night is over. Be careful and no more wild chances like last night. I'm sending these two men with you."

"I know, Earl," Larry said. "I'm not worried about myself."

"Then for Miss Henderson's sake, be careful."

They shook hands and Larry got into the car. Pearson stood on the sidewalk watching the car merge into the evening traffic. Then he turned back to his office.

●

Except that it was already growing dark, Larry had the same feeling of exhilaration he experienced coming into New York. But a lot had changed in the short time since then. He was free and looking for fun when he left his farm and headed for New York. Then the man appeared in the road and gave him his strange message. Since then, things happened thick and fast. Larry was now up to his neck in a case that seemed queerer than any he had ever read in the dime magazines. The time passed all too slowly for him. But finally they arrived at Henderson's estate in Scarsdale.

The house was set far back off the main road. The neatly trimmed lawns were guarded by low stone fences. Larry could look over the wall to the house surrounded by trees. Lights were on in most of the windows. The car stopped at a large iron gate.

The two FBI men got out. "You better take the wheel and

drive in yourself," one of them said. "We'll slip over the wall and make ourselves comfortable in that wooded grove near the house."

"I don't see why—" Larry began.

"The Chief wants it that way," the second FBI man said. "We'll be around outside here. So if you need us, just give a good lusty yell and we'll come running. Better still," the man added, reaching into his pocket, "use this if you have to." He pulled a revolver out and handed it to Larry.

Larry slipped it into his coat pocket. "Okay," he said. He shifted the gears while one of the men opened the iron gates for him and drove into the wide sweeping drive that led up to the house.

A stony-faced butler let him in and escorted him to the music room.

Arline Henderson was sitting in front of an old-fashioned open fireplace, reading a book. The only light in the room was the one just behind her chair and the log fire sent vague shadows scampering over the walls. She was bent over the book, her profile sharply outlined by the flames beyond it. She glanced up as he entered. But the picture of Arline sitting there quietly remained stamped indelibly on his mind.

"Hello," she said, rising quickly and coming toward him. She extended both her hands to him. "I'm terribly glad you could come, although I'm afraid the circumstances will label me as a nuisance."

"On the contrary," Larry replied. "This comes under the heading of pleasure. I've been looking forward to seeing you again." He held her hand a little longer than was necessary and found it to his liking. She made no effort to withdraw her hand from his.

"You can't make me believe that you haven't another reason for this visit. Something connected with our mutual friend, Satan?" She laughed softly.

"What makes you think that?"

"Oh, I don't think you'd want to waste an evening here in the wilds just for the fun of it. Satan must have threatened me again."

"You don't think I'd like this—this evening with you for its own sake?"

"I don't see why you should," she came back quickly. "Tell me the truth, am I in danger again?"

Larry glanced around the room, trying to avoid giving an answer. "Nice place you have here," he said lamely.

But there was no changing the subject with Arline. "You're avoiding my question," she said, staring frankly into his eyes. "Am I in danger? And is that why you came out here?"

"Yes, to the first question," he said. "But if Earl Pearson finds out I told you, he'll have my life."

"He won't from me," she said, laughing. "And the second question?"

"I'd rather not answer that one," Larry said. "It's a bit more complicated and will need a complicated answer."

"We have all evening," Arline said, pursing her lips. "Won't you try?"

Larry wanted to bend over and kiss her lips there and then. He resisted the temptation—and cursed himself for it. That was not how his heroes acted in the novels he wrote. But then, this wasn't one of his novels. "What shall we do?" he asked.

"Sit and talk," Arline replied. "I feel as though I've known you for a long time. That's what comes of reading your books." She waved her hand sweeping around the room. "How do you like the hearth and home atmosphere?"

"I like it fine, though I didn't expect you to go for it."

"You don't know me as well as I know you. For books reveal a good deal about you, you know. In an inverse or reverse sort of way. I arranged this very carefully for you."

"Well, it seems that you do know something about what I like," he said.

She threw a look full of laughter at him. "Oh, I do," she said. "In fact, you needn't bother answering my second question."

Larry felt himself blushing at her frank manner. And he felt good inside.

"But suppose we sit here by the fire," Arline said indicating the couch facing the fireplace. "It really isn't cold enough for

a fire, but I like an open fireplace. Sometimes I find myself hoping for a rainy, chilly afternoon, just so I can have the fire going with an open conscience."

Larry sat down. "Now if you'll just bring me my pipe and slippers . . ."

"I'm terribly sorry," Arline said, with mock sorrow, "but I'm afraid the dog chewed up your slippers and I—I washed out your pipe and forgot to use Lux. It shrank."

"Never mind, then," Larry said, reaching into his pocket and bringing out his pipe. "I have another pipe here."

They looked at each other and both laughed. The threat of Satan hovering over them seemed forgotten. There was a moment of silence after their laughter while both cast about for a subject that would prove of mutual interest. It was like the first gentle sparring of two fencers.

"How about some music?" she asked, jumping to her feet. "We have quite a collection of records."

"Fine," he agreed. Inwardly he squirmed, thinking he was going to be put through a couple of hours of swing music and Sinatra, both of which he disliked. He watched her as she brought out a large record album and opened the radiophonograph. She put a record on and placed the pick-up. Then she turned, waiting for the music to begin.

Larry groaned inwardly. Here it comes. He didn't realize it, but it was like a test. He had not been wrong about Arline yet. But what if it turned out that their tastes in music were dissimilar. Somehow, it was very important to him at that moment.

"How's this?" she asked, turning the set up more.

He sat upright suddenly. The room was filled with the opening strains of Saint-Saëns' Rondo Capriccioso. He tried to tell himself that he never doubted for a moment that she liked classical music. He didn't believe himself, but he was glad that she chose a classical piece.

"That's the Heifetz recording, isn't it?" he asked, knowing well that it was, but wanting to hear her voice again.

"Yes," she said. "I love it. I play it over and over again."

The next three hours were the most pleasant that Larry

had spent in a long time. It was his contention that the best enjoyment of good music came when it was being shared with someone else. And Arline, he felt, was the perfect companion for him. He sat back in his chair and let her play whatever she liked hearing. There was Sibelius, though he did not care too much for the Finn's pedantic stiffness, then Mozart, Bach, Beethoven—a banquet of music.

The world of crime and violence was far away. Satan was some figment of a deranged imagination. There was only the music and Arline for him then.

Later, when he said good night, although they had spoken little, he felt as if he had known her for years, too. He knew that she felt the same way. Her blue eyes were warm with a light that only love or music can kindle. And he wondered which it was.

His room was on the second floor, overlooking the spacious landscaped lawn. After he had undressed and climbed into bed, he lay for a long time thinking of the girl somewhere in another part of the house. He wondered if she was lying in her bed at that moment, dreaming of him. And gazing into the darkness, seeing his image as he was seeing hers.

It was with an effort that he brought his mind back to the events of the past several days and to the warning that had brought him to the Henderson home. It seemed almost impossible that it had been such a short time since the dying man had gasped out his message. It seemed years ago—not days.

He was more confused about the identity of Satan now than he had been when he had reviewed the case that first day. Now he wasn't sure about anyone. It might be any one of the men he had met, or none of them.

It could be Renalt himself, or Henderson. He wondered about both Sutton and Bell, but Sutton had been with Lane when the bank was robbed, and Bell had been with Pearson and himself when the armored-car guards were killed. Or it might be Pearson himself—but there he went again, Larry thought, smiling in the dark—suspecting the FBI. He might be Satan himself, Larry remarked to himself, chuckling in the

dark. Finally, exhausted by trying to puzzle it out, he fell asleep.

It was almost morning when something awakened him. He never knew just what it was that stirred his drugged senses into alertness. Perhaps one of the myriad of the night noises, or maybe it was the soft scrape of cloth against wood.

For a moment, he looked unseeingly into the darkness, while his senses orientated themselves to the surroundings. Then suddenly he was wide awake. His whole body tensed, the muscles tingled with a strange thrill, a surging, sharp wakefulness.

Framed against the graying sky outside, he saw the dark outlines of a figure coming slowly through the window. There was a faint sound of cloth rubbing against the sill, the muffled grunt of someone exerting his strength.

"Satan!" flashed through Larry's mind. He wondered if this was the way Jeffrey Lane met him. Quickly his mind reviewed a number of salient facts. Satan knew he was here, knew he was in this room. Who was in on the secret that he was spending the night at the Henderson home? Names went through his mind. Pearson, Sutton, Bell, Henderson, the two FBI men. . . . There was a leak from there. Was this a trap to get him? Did someone intentionally set the stage to get him, Larry Donald, up to the Henderson home in Scarsdale and kill him?

There was no time to think through to find the answer.

He slipped silently from the bed.

The pleasant evening was over. It had been an interlude in a grim battle for life.

He prepared for the fight.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

AN IMP OF SATAN

CHOOSING HIS STEPS CAREFULLY, LARRY ADVANCED TO MEET THE intruder. His heart was beating wildly; he was sure that the

man could hear it. By this time, the figure was already in the room, beginning to emerge with the deeper gloom. Larry sprang.

The fist he had aimed at the dim face, crashed into a shoulder. The intruder evidently wore a heavily padded coat, for the blow jarred Larry's whole arm. The man whirled, muttered a startled oath. Larry noticed that he spoke in English, without an accent. This, then, must be the leader, Satan himself.

Before he could gather himself for another blow, Larry's arms were pinioned to his sides. Step by step he was forced back until he came to a halt against the foot of the bed. Larry Donald was certainly no weakling but he found himself powerless in a grip of steel. Those arms never once slacked, as a shoulder pressed against his chest, forcing him still further back.

Sharp pains began shooting up the small of his back as he was bent over the railing of the bed. His breath was rasping in his throat. The labored breathing of the intruder seemed unnaturally loud in the dark room—inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale . . .

Larry could feel his eyes turning back in his head, his senses reeling. His back was one mass of flame.

Then there was a shout from somewhere outside, a noise that barely reached Larry through the roaring in his ears. There was an answering shout from another spot on the lawn. Then there was the scuffle of feet in the hallway.

The pressure on Larry lessened—and was gone. He was vaguely conscious of a crouched figure silhouetted for a moment in the window before dropping from sight. Then he passed out.

When he came to, the room was ablaze with light. The stony-faced butler was standing at the foot of the bed, dressed in a faded dressing gown and holding a basin of water. Arline, a blue robe over her pajamas, was sponging his face with a damp cloth. One of Pearson's men was standing near her.

"Are you all right, darling," she asked softly as his eyes opened.

"Did you say 'darling'?" Larry asked.

"Yes."

"I thought you did." He grinned weakly and pushed himself up on one elbow. Twinges of pain still shot through his back.

"That was a close call," the FBI man said. "I don't suppose you got anything that will help identify him."

"Not a thing," Larry admitted. "It was too dark. But he didn't have an accent, so . . ."

"Satan himself, eh?" The officer whistled.

"He got away?" Larry said.

"Yes. I got in one snap shot at him but I'm pretty sure I missed."

"The guards?" Larry asked.

"One of them killed, the other has a fractured skull and will be lucky if he lives. I've already called a doctor, the Scarsdale police and reported to Pearson. He wants us to bring you into town right after breakfast. That is if you feel up to it."

"I think I'll be all right in a moment," Larry said. He sat up. A wave of nausea swept over him, but in a moment it had passed and he was able to walk with only a slight amount of pain. He turned to Arline.

"I'll be all right," he said. "Don't worry. Can you take care of the FBI until morning? I don't think there's any more need for them to hang around outside."

She gave instructions to the butler who nodded and led Pearson's men out of the room. Larry and Arline were left alone.

"I think you ought to try to get some rest, darling," she said.

He took her hand in both of his. "Just keep on calling me that, and I'll be well in no time. In fact, just once more."

"All right, darling," she said. "I was worried, you know."

"Not as much as I was," he chuckled. Then his face became serious. "Listen, Arline, I need your help. I can't trust anyone. Everything we plan, everything we do is known to Satan."

"What can I do?" she asked.

"Leave this place with me. Right now!"

"Oh, Mr. Donald," she began in a mocking tone.

"This is serious, Arline," he interrupted. "We have to work

fast. Satan intended to kill me, I'm sure of that. And then he was going to kidnap you. I've got a plan that will give him a surprise for a change. Up to now, we've been sort of waiting for him to make a play and then we tried to stop him. I want to take the offensive for a change."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Get dressed, slip out of this place and go to the city."

"But why?" she asked, surprised.

"I want everyone to think that Satan actually kidnapped you. I want to see what Satan does when he is puzzled. He'll be the only one who'll know that you have not really been kidnapped."

"I'll do it if you want to me to," Arline said, doubtfully.

"Go to the Eastern Hotel and register under the name of—" he paused for a moment, thinking. "Register as Isabell Walker. And stay in your room until you hear from me."

"All right," she said. She hesitated a moment, then bent over and kissed him on the cheek, quickly. Before he could say anything, she ran out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

Larry and the FBI men left early in the morning, before the rest of the household was awake. They drove without stopping for breakfast, at full speed until they arrived at the Federal Building. But as Larry entered the room, he met the scowling look of Pearson. Bell and Captain Sutton were already there.

"What's the matter?" Larry asked. "You'd think Satan pulled another fast one from the way you look."

"He did," Pearson snapped. "And you're not going to like this. Arline Henderson has been kidnapped."

"But that's impossible," Larry feigned surprise. "Why I left her last night—"

"Evidently he returned," Pearson interrupted. "I just had a call from Scarsdale telling me that Arline can't be found. Her bedroom is in disorder, showing that she had resisted. But she's gone all the same."

"Good for her," Larry thought. "She certainly made it look real."

"If you're thinking of going back up there, forget it. She's in

Satan's hands. And I don't think he's located up at Scarsdale."

Larry sat down in a chair. Everyone was silent.

"This is a most complicated affair, I dare say," Captain Sutton said. "Are you sure someone isn't pulling your leg, Pearson? After all, Satan made one attempt up there and failed. Surely you don't think he'd be fool enough to come back again? He'd be expecting the guards to be more watchful, you know. Locking the stable door after the horse is stolen and all that sort of psychology."

"Well, it seems that Satan thought two steps ahead instead of one," Bell said. "He came back and caught Larry and the FBI guards unawares."

Captain Sutton was frankly puzzled. "Not like him," he said. "At least I gave him more credit than he appears to deserve."

"That's funny," Larry said without a trace of humor in his voice. "Satan out-thinks us again and Captain Sutton thinks less of him now."

"It wasn't cricket, you know," Captain Sutton insisted.

Larry wondered if he hadn't over-estimated Sutton's ability.

"Any hunches on what Satan will do next?" Jon asked Larry.

"Well, we can expect a ransom note for Arline Henderson, for one thing," Larry answered him. "He certainly didn't kidnap her for the hell of it."

"Right-o," said Captain Sutton. "I believe you're right again, Donald." The British Secret Service man nodded thoughtfully.

"And I suppose there's nothing we do but wait," Pearson said.

Larry shrugged his shoulders. "I haven't any more ideas."

Just then the door opened and Sparks poked his head in. "Telegram for you, chief." He walked in and laid it on the desk. Pearson nodded to him and picked it up. "See if the boys had any success with that message they picked up from the German radio. I want to see the results as soon as they break it down."

"Okay," Sparks said, closing the door behind him.

Pearson opened the telegram and read it, frowning.

"Is that the ransom demand?" Larry asked.

"No, it's a warning to Bell," Pearson replied. He passed the sheet of paper to Bell.

WILL YOU GIVE BELL A MESSAGE FOR ME LIKE A GOOD FELLOW? TELL HIM THAT DONALD WAS A WRITER WHO DID NOT STICK TO THE PROFESSION HE WAS CUT OUT FOR. BELL KNOWS THE OLD CHINESE PROVERB THAT SAYS MAN WHO PUT EYE TO KEYHOLE IS APT TO LOSE EYE. HE WILL UNDERSTAND.

S. II.

"What does he mean?" Pearson asked, when Bell put the telegram down. "Are you working a few angles that I don't know about? If you are, all I can say is that I didn't expect it of you. Larry, of course, is a different case. But I expect more cooperation from you." He shot a quick look at Larry when he mentioned him. Larry caught it and wondered if he knew more about Arline Henderson's disappearance than he let on.

"Good reasoning, Earl," Bell chuckled. "I have been doing some investigating on my own."

"And?"

"It's too soon to tell you anything. All I have is a suspicion. One you'd probably laugh at if I told you. But there should be something definite soon. Perhaps today. I'm expecting a cablegram from London. I'll talk when it arrives."

"You won't talk now?" Pearson asked, a little angry.

"No," Jon replied. "You know me, Earl. Anything for a scoop. I'll talk when I have definite proof about my hunch. Or rather, about my suspicions, for it's more than a hunch."

"Is that all you get from that telegram?" Larry asked.

"Satan is going after Jon next," Pearson replied. "That's rather obvious."

Captain Sutton chuckled. "I see Donald's point," he said. "Rather obvious, eh, what?"

Pearson glanced over the telegram again. "Hmmm, yes. Satan gives more than a strong hint here that he has taken care of Larry."

"Evidently that telegram was either sent before the attack on me, which is out of the question since you would have had it earlier. Or Satan had one of his men send it and didn't have time to call it back," Larry pointed out. "It looks like Satan is not having things his own way now."

"This telegram is a departure from the usual cheap writing paper he has been using for his letters," Pearson said, thoughtfully. "I think you're right, Larry. Satan is becoming careless. He has permitted one of his henchmen to slip up." He examined the telegram. "It was filed in a Times Square office and the clerk will probably have no idea of what the sender looked like."

"I say," Captain Sutton broke in. "You Americans are frightfully funny, if you'll pardon me for saying so. I'll wager if this had happened in London, Scotland Yard would already have traced that telegram and the chappie that sent it would have jolly well been in jail."

"Look," Pearson said with a forced smile, "you were sent over here to cooperate with us in checking spies, not to boast of Scotland Yard. To date, about the only thing you've contributed in any way is a lot of talk—and I hope you don't mind my being brutally frank."

"Not at all, Pearson," Captain Sutton waved his hand majectically, "Not at all. Go on."

"Well, now, if you're so damn good, suppose you take this telegram and find out the man who sent it. And you can take all the time you want on this. You don't have to come back until you find him. Agreed?"

"Agreed," said the captain. He rose leisurely, took the telegram and folding it neatly, tucked it into his pocket. There was a supercilious grin on his face as he went to the door. "Cheerio," he said. "I rather think all our nerves are a bit on edge, what?" He waved his hand jauntily and walked out.

"You can't help liking a guy like him," Jon remarked.

The others nodded their heads in agreement.

"Well, I'll be off," Jon said. "See you after I've had some sleep."

It was still quite early in the morning. Larry and Pearson were alone in the office. They sat in silence, Larry busy with his thoughts and Pearson bent over his desk, writing savagely. Finally Pearson put his pen aside and looked at Larry. There was a gentle look in his eyes.

"How do you feel?" he asked.

"Pretty good," Larry said. "But my body feels as though I'd had a slight attack of rheumatism. That's about all. And, of course, there's Arline."

"Too bad you weren't able to hold him, or to see enough of him for identifying purposes."

"You know," Larry said, frowning thoughtfully, "I think there was something familiar about him. But I can't seem to remember just what it was. It was some vague impression that I got toward the end, just before I passed out. I've been racking my brains all morning trying to recall what it was. I'm sorry I missed the chance of nabbing him."

"That's all right," Pearson said gruffly. "Maybe it'll come to you later."

"I suppose so, but it's damn irritating. Like coming into a room and feeling that you've been there before but not able to remember when. I have a feeling that it ties up with something way in the back of my head. Maybe I'll get it yet. I hope so."

Sparks opened the door. He held an envelope in his hand. "This was left on my desk," he explained, "while I went over to the code room."

"Let's have it," Pearson reached out for the letter. "It's probably the ransom message from Satan. You know, I'm getting a bit tired of his letters."

He read the letter, and nodded, passing it over to Larry.

My dear Pearson:

Please inform Mr. Henderson and Mr. Donald not to worry about Arline. She is in good hands. Have Henderson take the $100,000 he owes me and place it in an envelope. Leave that envelope in Bell's apartment. I will call for it at my convenience. Arline Henderson will be released after I have the money. But this time I want action in twenty-four hours. I will wait no longer than that.

Sincerely yours,
Satan II.

Larry placed the letter on the desk. His face was wreathed in a smile.

"I don't see what you have to smile about," Pearson remarked. "I thought you were in love with that girl."

"I'm smiling because I know Satan is bluffing this time. He hasn't got Arline."

"What!" Pearson jumped up from his chair. "How do you know?"

"Because I was the one who kidnapped Arline—in a way, that is."

"You better explain and explain fast. And make it good!" Pearson said, angrily.

"First to check up," Larry said, reaching for the phone. He dialed the number of the Eastern Hotel and asked for Isabell Walker.

"Hello? . . . Arline? Good . . . It's Larry, of course. I'm in Pearson's office. We just got a note from Satan in which he claims credit for kidnapping you . . . Stay put, darling. If you want to get in touch with me, you can reach me here. Or Pearson. Yes, he knows about it now. I just told him." He listened, smiling, then hung up.

Pearson had a smile on his face. "Good work, Larry. This may be the fatal slip that Satan was bound to make."

"Yes, but there's something we've got to reason out," Larry said. "I told you about Arline because you haven't been out of my sight since I came here. I know you couldn't have sent that note. And only two others knew that Arline was missing. Bell and Sutton!"

Pearson stared at him. "Then you think that Satan is one of those two?" he asked.

"I don't see how Satan could have known enough to send that note if he wasn't?" Larry replied, sure of his ground. "Either that, or one of them has been Satan's source of information."

"Bell or Captain Sutton!" Pearson exclaimed, beginning to pace the floor. "I can't believe it. It's too simple."

"The simplicity has been the thing that's been our stumbling block," Larry insisted. "I set this trap to see what it would catch. I think we've caught Satan."

"You're wrong," Pearson said, stopping in front of him. "I don't think either one of them is the man we're looking for."

"It must be," Larry insisted. "All we have to do is eliminate one of them. Satan is the other. Only the four of us knew that Arline was missing. No one else did. Now Satan knows. You and I have been together all along, we know that we didn't send that note. But Bell and Sutton left. One of them must be Satan."

Pearson shook his head. "Your reasoning is correct, but you started from a wrong premise. I'm certain that neither one of them is Satan, though I may be wrong. The butler at the Henderson house in Scarsdale phoned me. He knew Arline was missing. The message came over the phone, and Satan might have tapped the wires, though I checked them several times. There's just one thing we can be sure of—"

"And that?"

"You and I are the only ones who know that Arline Henderson is *not* kidnapped!"

"You're sure your phone is not tapped?"

"Positive! If Arline Henderson is kidnapped from the Eastern Hotel—then either you or I must be Satan!"

"We'll wait, then," Larry said grimly. "Now I'll go home and see if I can get some rest."

CHAPTER TWELVE

SATAN'S HENCHMAN

THE STEADY RINGING OF THE TELEPHONE WOKE LARRY UP. HE groaned and turned over. Every muscle in his body ached. He picked up the wrist watch on the little table beside his bed and glanced at it. It was already six o'clock in the evening. He had slept through most of the day, and his body still felt tired.

He picked up the receiver and yawned into it. "Hello?"

"This is Pearson," the voice on the other end said. "Are you coming down here?"

"Yes," Larry said. "Anything turn up?"

"They found the man in the road," Pearson said.

"Was it your man Tucker?"

"I don't know yet. Sparks went over to identify the body. If you're coming down, I'll probably have a call from him by the time you get here."

"Be right over," Larry said, suppressing another yawn. He replaced the receiver and crawled out of bed. He staggered to the bathroom and soaked his head in cold water. Then he returned and picked up the phone.

He dialed the Eastern Hotel and asked for Miss Walker. Arline answered the ring almost at once.

"That you, darling?" she asked.

"How many men do you expect to be calling you up?" he asked in turn.

"Just one," Arline said. "And that's you."

"How are you doing?" Larry asked.

"All quiet here," Arline answered. "But God! How bored I am? Why don't you come over? Or take me out or something? Are you the jealous type?"

"Very," Larry said. "Especially of a certain gentleman who calls himself Satan. You stay put there and don't dare stick your nose out of your door. Have your meals brought up to you—"

"Darling, how do you think I've been living until now?" she laughed.

"On love," he said. "My love."

"I'm a little more materialistic than that," Arline said. "Besides, you're not here."

"You know, I'm really indebted to Satan."

"Really?"

"He brought us together."

"And now he's keeping us apart."

"Don't worry, honey, we'll get him. He sent in a note on your ransom, you know. That was a bad blunder on his part, but I still don't know how."

"Well, hurry and arrest him, darling. How long do you expect me to wait for you?"

"Eternity?" he asked. "No? Well, a couple of more days

then. I'm going over to Pearson's office now. So long, darling."

"So long, Larry."

He hung up the receiver and sat dreaming for a long time. It was worth all he had gone through just to have found a girl like Arline, Larry was thinking. Then he roused himself, shaved, dressed and hurried downtown.

He met Bell just going in when he arrived at the Federal Building, and told him the news about Tucker on the way up.

Pearson was alone when they came in.

"Where's Captain Sutton," Bell asked as Pearson looked up from his desk.

"He should be here any minute now. I talked to him on the phone a little while ago. He claims he's got something very important for us."

"Don't tell me he's found out who sent that telegram?" Larry remarked.

"Can't ever tell about the British, you know, old boy," Jon said. "I thought we'd be rid of him for a while. He said he wasn't coming back until he did trace that telegram."

"He might have found something," Larry ventured. "We can certainly use every scrap of new information at this stage."

Jon Bell laughed silently. "Remember what happened to Lane and Tucker—if it was Tucker you met in the road—when they found something. They practically signed their own death warrants. I hope nothing happens to Captain Sutton."

"Now that you've finished," Pearson said a bit bitterly, "you don't have to wonder who that man Larry found in the road is."

"You got a report from Sparks?" Larry asked.

"Yes. It was Tucker, all right. Only they found him hidden under some bushes in the woods near the spot you described. He'd been lying there for some time, you know."

"Yes," Larry said quietly. "Satan certainly can be ruthless. No wonder he promises to work with any country that will bid high enough for his services."

"Patriotism seldom means anything to rats," Jon said. "Our gangsters are the material from which quislings are made.

That's why the black market exists. The foreign enemy might start it, but our own traitors keep it rolling—all because they can make a few extra dollars. Or have a few extra steaks during the week."

"Forget your column when you come in here," Pearson said. "We're convinced. You don't have to agitate us."

The door opened and Captain Sutton entered. In addition to his usual surprised look, his face wore the hint of a smirk.

"Good evening, Captain," Pearson said. "Sorry I was so rude yesterday. I shouldn't have lost my temper."

"Quite all right, old boy," Sutton replied carelessly. He was beaming with some secret knowledge.

"He looks ready to burst," Jon said. "Come on, Captain. Out with it. What have you got up that sleeve of yours?"

"I believe I blame well earned that apology from Pearson," Sutton replied. "I've discovered the chappie who sent that telegram for Satan, I have."

"What!" Pearson leaped up from his chair.

"Quite," Sutton said. He nodded at them, smirking proudly. "That chappie who sent that telegram about Bell. I know who he is."

"Well, don't stand there ready to blow up with pride. Let's have it. Who is he?"

"His name is Hermann Schwenker. He lives up in what you call Yorkville. I have the address somewhere about me." He fumbled in his pockets and finally found what he was looking for. He glanced at it to make sure and then passed it over to Pearson.

Pearson pressed a button on his desk. Then he picked up the telephone and gave the number of the New York office of the FBI.

"Preston?" he said a moment later, "have four or five men meet me at once up in Yorkville. I've finally got a real lead on this Satan. Send them to—" He glanced at the paper in his hand and read off the address. "Got that?" he asked. "Good! Tell them to make it fast!"

He cradled the phone and grabbed his hat. "Come on!" he said starting for the door. Sparks had it open for him.

'The car's ready downstairs," Sparks said. "I heard you on the phone and buzzed for it."

"Good!" Pearson exclaimed as he ran through the door.

Bell and Pearson followed him. Captain Sutton, a bit dazed from the sudden flurry of activity, brought up the rear.

With the siren wide open, Pearson piloted the big sedan skillfully through the evening traffic, weaving in and out with a speed that left more than one driver cursing.

"My word," Sutton said, as they took a corner on two wheels, "we *are* moving fast!"

"Like Scotland Yard, eh?" Larry couldn't resist saying.

"Precisely," the captain answered.

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It was a quick trip. But when they arrived they had to wait five or ten minutes for the other carload of men. As soon as they arrived, Pearson stationed two of the men at the rear of the house and two at the front. Then, followed by Bell, Sutton and Larry and two heavy-set Federal men, he mounted the steps of the brownstone house. He stopped and examined the letter boxes. Hermann Schwenker occupied apartment 2F. The downstairs door was unlocked and the men filed in and up the stairs. They made their way quietly to the front apartment and Pearson knocked on the door.

"Wer ist?" queried a heavy voice from within.

"Police," Pearson said. "Open up!"

There was a moment of startled silence and they could hear footsteps move cautiously within.

Then the voice spoke again. *"Nein,"* he said. "Go 'way."

"All right," Pearson spoke quietly to one of the Federal men. The two of them hit the door together. With a crash that tore one hinge loose, the door came open and sagged to one side. The five of them crowded quickly into the room and separated.

A middle-aged, heavily-built man, with close-cropped hair, stood at the far side of the room. Directly over his head hung a large picture of Adolf Hitler, draped with a swastika flag. There was an expression of defiance on his stolid face, a Lüger gripped in his right hand, held at his side.

"You are under arrest," Pearson began calmly.

"*Nein,*" the German said again, shaking his head. "Heil Hitler!" He began to raise the gun at his side.

Pearson and the two FBI men reached for their guns. But Captain Sutton was before them. Larry was surprised to see the captain, ordinarily so slow moving, act so fast. His hand flashed inside his jacket and came out with a Webley automatic while the others were still reaching for theirs. The Lüger was almost waist high, when the Webley cracked once—sounding sharp and vicious in the narrow confines of the small room.

An expression of ludicrous surprise spread over the German's heavy face. To Larry it seemed as though his expression changed layer by layer. His mouth opened as though to say something, but no sound came forth, and then closed. He licked his lips.

The men stood immobile as statues—smoke from the Webley weaving around them—their eyes fixed on the German. It was odd, thought Larry, his thoughts floating out as though coming from another person, that six men—four of them seasoned man-hunters—could be so transfixed by the sight of a dying man.

A small patch of red was spreading rapidly on the German's left shirt-front, yet still he stood upright, only swaying a little. The Lüger was lowered again until it hung limply from the hand at his side. He put one arm up in a wavering Nazi salute, and held it as rigidly as he could. Then slowly he began to bend at the knees, sagging lower and lower, his eyes fixed in the distance. His face still wore a surprised expression. Then, suddenly, his whole body relaxed and he pitched forward on his face.

The spell was broken. Pearson rushed forward and bent over the man, feeling for his wrist.

"He's dead all right," Pearson said, as though not wanting to believe the evidence of his eyes. "No chance to get any information from him."

"I'm sorry, old man," Sutton said, "but there was no chance to place my shot. He had his pistol almost on us."

"It wasn't your fault," Pearson said. "In fact, it's a good thing you shot him. I expect we would have been too late. It's just one of those unlucky breaks."

Larry felt himself seized by nausea as he looked at the hulk on the floor that had but a minute before been a man. A tiny trickle of blood was running from under the body, making its way across the floor in an uncertain pattern. Larry turned away and gazed out of the window.

Pearson called the police headquarters and reported the death of Hermann Schwenker. Then he and the three men began a systematic search of the room. They went through everything in the house but found nothing of any value. In a small box, resting in a bureau drawer, they found an iron cross, a signed picture of Heinrich Himmler, and the key to a code. But that was all.

Disgruntled, Pearson turned the room over to the men from Centre Street and they left. Larry began to feel a little better as the fresh air struck his face.

"You look a bit green around the gills, Larry," Jon whispered to him. "I thought you'd be hardened by this time."

"No, it wasn't seeing a man die," Larry replied. "It was the stupid and stolid way he died that got me. Why didn't he surrender? Why did he try to fight it out? We were six against him! Couldn't he understand that?"

"What makes you think he wanted to fight it out?"

"You saw him raise his gun, didn't you?" Larry asked. "Why should he want to do that if he didn't—" He stopped suddenly and looked at Bell.

Bell nodded at him. "Perhaps he *wanted* to die—and didn't have the nerve to blow his own head off."

"Then Satan must have certainly put the fear of death into

his men!" Larry said. "He could have been afraid that he'd be made to talk."

Jon nodded. "I think that's what it was. But you don't have to mention it to them." He indicated Pearson and Sutton with a jerk of his head. "If they don't think of it, it doesn't matter. Personally, I think Earl is aware of it. And Sutton, too. He's a lot smarter than we've been giving him credit for being."

"He's certainly faster with a gun than I would have believed him capable of being," Larry admitted.

Pearson silently got into his car. "I'm going back to headquarters," he announced. "Any of you coming?"

"Not me," Jon said. "I'll drop into the office, then go to work."

"All right," Pearson said. "See you in the morning."

Larry and Sutton got into the car. The three of them were silent on the ride down town.

"Drop me off near Bell's apartment," Larry said.

Pearson did not reply. But he stopped the car and let Larry out when they reached the street where Bell lived. The car immediately drove off.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE NIHILIST CODE

FOR THE SECOND TIME WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, LARRY WAS roused out of sleep by the harsh jangling of the telephone. He picked up the receiver. Pearson was on the other end.

"Larry?" Pearson asked.

"Yes," Larry replied. He waited, holding his breath painfully. The first thought that had come into his mind was *Arline!* He waited to hear what had made Pearson phone so early in the morning.

"Is Jon Bell there? Wake him and drag him down here!"

"Jon hasn't come in yet," Larry replied glancing into the

next room. "At least I can see from here that his bed hasn't been slept in."

"Make sure," Pearson snapped.

"Okay." Wondering what it was all about, Larry laid down the receiver and made a round of the apartment. There was no sign that Bell had come in during the night.

"He hasn't come in yet," Larry told Pearson when he picked up the receiver again. "What is it?" He was glad that the call didn't concern Arline. She was safe and he breathed easier for that.

"I've got the results on that code we picked up on the radio," Pearson said. "The boys finally broke it down."

"And?"

"Come over and you can see for yourself. You'll know why I want to get hold of Bell."

"Did you try some of the night spots?"

"Yes. I'll tell you the results when I see you." Pearson hung up.

Larry dressed quickly, wondering what Pearson had found in that coded radio message. There was a tinge of hardness in his voice. Jon Bell was an old friend of his. From what he had gathered, Bell and Pearson had worked together on cases often in the past. They had been mutually helpful, too. Pearson always managed to slip some advance information to Jon and Jon had reciprocated by passing on to the FBI man the various rumors and bits of information he had picked up in his night-club reporting.

But Pearson did not sound as though he were speaking of a close friend when he asked for Bell. Could there be something in the message to implicate Bell? Larry finished dressing and grabbed his hat. He was lucky to catch a cab on the corner. The street was still dark, the street lamps casting a pale light that struggled against the gray coming up over the buildings. There was a smell of fresh, crisp air in the street. It felt as though he were along the business section of a small town. In a couple of hours, Larry thought, the air will be filled with

the fumes and noises of traffic. The illusion that he was in a small town would vanish. But he enjoyed the present as the cab took him downtown to the Federal Building.

Captain Sutton was again in his favorite chair, legs in the accustomed position, when Larry entered Pearson's office.

"Any luck finding Bell?" Larry asked.

"None," Pearson replied. "He's always around except at a time like this, when I have some important questions to ask him."

"As a result of the coded message?" Larry asked as he took a seat next to Pearson's desk.

"Right," Pearson answered shortly. "The New York office had to work pretty hard to break the message but they did it. Incidentally, I believe that the letter Tucker gave you for me contained the code." Pearson pushed several sheets of paper toward Larry. "Here it is. The first item is the message as it came over the air in Morse code. The second sheet is the first step in breaking it down. The third is the message. The fourth item is the key." He passed the paper across. They bent over it.

(1)

BB-AE-DD AB-AE-CA-CA DC-CD-CD-CC BD-CB-CE-CD-DB-DD-AA-CC-DD DB-AE-CE-CD-DB-DD BA-CD-DB CB-AA-BD-CD-DB CE-CA-AA-CC-DC DC-AA-DD-AA-CC

(2)

22-15-44 12-15-31-31 43-34-34-33 24-32-35-34-42-44-11-33-44 42-15-35-34-42-44 21-34-42 32-11-24-34-42 35-31-11-33-43 43-11-44-11-33

(3)

Get Bell soon Important Report for major plans Satan.

(4)

	1	2	3	4	5
1	A	B	C	D	E
2	F	G	H	IJ	K
3	L	M	N	O	P
4	Q	R	S	T	U
5	V	W	X	Y	Z

"And," Pearson went on, when Larry had finished reading it, "I can't understand the verbal message Tucker gave you. The word that had us puzzled most was 'Russian.' The rest was clear, more or less. Enough for us to act on. But that *Russian* led you to suspect Ivan Kallenikoff. What Tucker meant, I see now, was the *Russian Nihilist Code.* He was trying to tip us off that Satan's correspondence was carried on in that code."

"Well," drawled Captain Sutton for the first time since Larry came in, "that's one mystery solved, at any rate. But what does the message mean? I can't believe that Jon Bell is working with Satan!"

Larry glanced at Pearson. "What do you think about the message?" he asked.

"Although the message is signed by Satan," Pearson pointed out, "we know that Satan is in New York, not Berlin or wherever this message originated from."

"That's right," Larry interrupted. "Then whoever sent that message, was not signing himself as Satan but was obviously using the name as a password or indication to whom that message was to be delivered after it was picked up here."

"Very good," Captain Sutton remarked. "Quite logical."

"We can disregard that word," Pearson went on. "The message can mean that Satan is to contact Bell. The second half of the message probably means that some agreement has been met and Satan is to begin to work for the Nazis."

"I don't follow that," Larry said.

"We know from our Russian friends that Satan was negotiating with the Nazis for his services. He probably demanded a stiff price which they hesitated in meeting. The series of sensational crimes were staged by Satan in order to convince them of his ability. As a result, this message has come through. Himmler's boys evidently are convinced that Satan is hot stuff and will meet his demands."

"You chaps are hitting the bull's eye," Captain Sutton agreed. "The crimes Satan committed certainly were theatrical enough. I'd been wondering why he went to all that trouble to

warn us ahead of time and then carried it off in spite of all we did. He really needn't have gone to all that trouble just to steal the bloody money, what?"

"But how does Bell come into this the way you figure?" Larry insisted. "I agree that the second half of the message is probably what you say it is. It clears up the methods and madness of Satan's acts up to this point. But Bell—"

"Bell can be his inside man," Pearson said, his face grim. "Or he might have some connections—" He broke off suddenly. "I must be getting soft in the head!" He stared at the two men facing him, his eyes screwing up painfully. "Bell's been a good friend for a long time. I have no right to make such accusations."

"I might say I'm a bit more objective, what?" Captain Sutton drawled. "We've had our share of nasty experiences with old friends back in England, you know."

"But not Jon Bell," Larry said. "He's been carrying on a one-man war against subversive and appeaser elements for a long time. Check the back files on his syndicated column and you'll see. I wouldn't doubt Bell's patriotism for a moment!"

Captain Sutton shrugged his shoulders. "What is the nationality of Satan?" he asked quietly. "He seems ready to betray his country for a good sum. We don't know whether he's British or American or German. He may be any of these or something else. I'm sure none of you can tell me. Besides, all you have to do is look at France. Petain was a Marshal of the French Army—a great World War hero. He betrayed his country. Laval? A former Prime Minister. He betrayed. What makes you think that a former president of your country can't be a traitor? Or a great air hero of peace times? I don't say it is so—but from the experience of France or Norway or my own country, you shouldn't judge people by their past activities or by what they claim they are doing. Judge them on the basis of what they *are* doing now!" Captain Sutton got up from his chair. He slouched over to the window and stood with his back toward them.

His voice had been filled with bitterness as he spoke. Larry thought of the bombs dropping on London, of the French hostages facing the firing squads, of the Norwegians deported into slavery. A great anger came into him.

Captain Sutton turned back to the room and resumed his seat. "I'm giving you some good advice," he said softly. "I hope you never find out how correct I am about suspecting the traitors in your midst." He chuckled softly. "No, it's a painful process finding such things out. I personally don't want any of it."

The room was quiet for a long time after Captain Sutton had finished. It was the first time he had spoken so seriously, Larry realized. It was also the longest speech he had yet made.

Finally, Larry broke the silence in the room. "I still don't believe Bell is Satan. I'll admit that at times I thought so. I don't know. I think I know what that message meant."

"What's your theory?" Pearson asked, gently. Larry could see he was hoping that it was a good one.

"I think Satan is being instructed to 'get' Bell!" Larry announced. "The Nazis here in this country hate Jon more than they do any other man! He has exposed their plots and rackets again and again in his columns! They've threatened him many times—" Larry turned to Pearson. "You know that for a fact, Earl."

Pearson nodded his head.

"They've even attacked him several times," Larry continued.

"Yes, I know that, too," Pearson agreed.

"That's Satan's job now because the Bund stooges failed to 'get' Bell. And they want him out of their hair in the worst way! Satan's next job is killing Jon Bell!"

Pearson picked up the receiver. "Sparks?" he asked. "Any reports about Bell yet?" He listened for several minutes, then hung up.

"Nothing on him yet," he said. "My men have combed every night club in town, every gin mill. There's no sign of Bell. He hasn't been in his office either. But there is one thing, though.

They found out that a cable came for him late last evening. He stopped in the office and picked it up. That was the last time he was seen."

"That's the cable he was so anxious to receive," Larry remarked.

"By jove! It must have had the information he was so sure would lead us to Satan!" Captain Sutton exclaimed.

"If we can get our hands on it—" Pearson began. "I'll get in touch—"

"Leave that to me," Captain Sutton announced, rising. "I'll go over to our consul and cable London. Scotland Yard will send us a copy of that message in no time."

"All right," Pearson said. "I'll leave that end to you, while I try to get Bell. And I hope to hell I don't find him with his throat cut! When will people learn that in this business you don't work on your own!"

"Right, old boy! I'll have that cable in a jiffy." He waved his hand in farewell and left the room.

Daylight came in through the window. In the discussion, they did not notice that the lights were unnecessary. Absentmindedly, Larry went from light to light, switching them off. Suddenly he stopped and turned to Pearson.

"I'm worried about Arline," Larry said.

"Did you call her this morning?"

"Not yet," Larry answered. "It was too early when you called me up."

Pearson glanced at his watch. "You can call her now. It's almost nine."

Larry grabbed the phone and dialed the hotel. He waited while the operator called Arline's room.

"There's no answer," the operator told him.

Larry hung up, his face turning pale. He turned to Pearson.

"The operator rang her room," he said hoarsely. "She says there was no answer."

"Let's go over there," Pearson said, rising.

"I don't understand this," Larry said. He was a little stunned.

"Only you and I knew she was registered at the Eastern Hotel."

"She may still be sleeping," Pearson tried to explain as they went out of the building. "Or she may have stepped out for a moment."

"No, I'm afraid Satan has her!" Larry said. "By God! If that girl is hurt I'll tear Satan apart with my bare hands!"

"Easy, Larry," Pearson cautioned him. "Things are beginning to break fast for us. Losing your temper won't help matters."

"But you don't understand, Earl," Larry insisted. "That message from Berlin—Satan doesn't have to go in for sensational stuff any more. From now on he may start working quietly. He can cut off every lead we've got to him."

"We haven't got any real leads, Larry," Pearson said. "We've got a lot of things that are about to jell—but that's all. And no matter what Satan does, our information is going to take shape. He can't do anything about it."

"But Arline—"

"We'll probably find her fast asleep when we get there. At any rate, there's no need to worry yet."

"I can't help worrying, Earl. We may find Arline gone when we get there. Remember, the money wasn't left in Bell's apartment as Satan directed. And the twenty-four hours he gave us are up."

He stopped and stared at Pearson. A sudden, terrifying thought came into his mind.

"Do you think," Larry asked, "that Satan knew all along Arline was in that hotel? Is it possible that he wasn't bluffing at all when he demanded the ransom, claiming he had Arline?"

"It certainly is!" Pearson exclaimed. "He made a couple of dopes out of us—if Arline is missing! Come on! There's no time to lose!"

They dashed into Pearson's car and drove off at top speed.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

AM I SATAN?

THEY DIDN'T STOP TO BE ANNOUNCED TO ARLINE'S ROOM WHEN they came into the Eastern Hotel. Both Pearson and Larry reached the elevator on the run. Astounded looks followed them. The clerk motioned frantically to them but they paid no attention to him.

Inside the elevator, Pearson asked, "Do you know her room number?"

"It's 902," Larry replied.

They made the elevator operator ride non-stop to the ninth floor. Pearson flashed his badge at the man who immediately became cooperative.

"I'll call the house dick, Mister," he said, letting them off on the ninth floor.

They made no attempt to reply. Larry was in the van as they ran down the long corridor toward room 902. The door was locked when Larry tried to open it.

"We'll have to break it down!" Larry stepped back and hurled himself at the door. It didn't budge.

"These are iron doors, Larry," Pearson said. "Fire-proof stuff. You'll break your shoulder sooner than that door."

Wildly, Larry looked around for some means of opening the door. His eyes fell on a fire-axe down the corridor. He leaped for it, grabbed it from the hook and came tearing back. The elevator door opened behind them as he raised the axe over his head.

"Hold it!" a harsh voice shouted. "Stop—or I'll shoot!"

Surprised, they turned to find a beefy man, hotel detective written plainly in every manner and gesture, wrestling with a heavy service revolver that had become entangled in his hip pocket.

"You're the guy we want," Pearson cried out. "Stop playing with your gun and get out your skeleton keys."

"Who are you?" the man asked coming up to them. He was still trying to take his gun out. "And what do you want?"

"Shall I brain this dumb flatfoot?" Larry asked in exasperation. "Get your keys and open this door!"

"First you better tell me who the hell you guys are?" the beefy detective insisted. He was staring at them suspiciously.

"I'm Pearson of the FBI," Earl replied, speaking quickly. "Open this door."

"How do I know you guys ain't just a couple of crooks trying to pull off a new kind of swindle?"

Larry shoved the detective to one side and raised the axe again. "No use arguing with this jerk!" he shouted angrily.

"All right! All right! I'll open the door—but I'll want to see your credentials after that!"

The detective fished around in his pocket and pulled out a bunch of keys. After a moment's thought, he selected one and inserted it into the keyhole. The door swung open. Larry and Pearson stepped in while the house detective was having some trouble trying to get the key out again.

The room was empty.

They stopped and stared about them. Chairs were overturned. The bedside table was smashed. In general, the room showed signs of a terrific struggle. They exchanged significant looks.

"It's Satan, all right," Pearson said.

"Well, I wanna see them credentials of yours," the detective said, finally getting the key loose. "And no funny stuff."

Pearson held his papers out for the detective to examine. But he studied the room carefully. "Don't touch anything in here," he said.

The detective seemed satisfied. "I'm sorry, Mr. Pearson," he apologized. "But a guy can't be too careful in this business, you know. I gotta watch out for all kinds—"

"All right," Pearson interrupted him. "I want you to go to

the police and tell them that I want the finger-print men to go over every inch of this room."

The detective reached for the room phone.

"Not that, you idiot!" Pearson shouted. The man withdrew his hand as if he had touched a red-hot iron. "Don't touch anything in this room. Call from another phone."

"Yes, sir," the detective replied, meekly. He started for the door.

"And I'd like to talk to the people who have the rooms on both sides of this one. Also those below and above."

"I'll tell them, Mr. Pearson," the detective said, as he left the room.

For the next hour, Pearson questioned the occupants of the neighboring rooms. But he could get no information from them. Not one had heard any unusual sounds. In spite of the disorder in the room, it was obvious no sound had been made. That, or the people giving Pearson the information were remarkable liars.

"They were telling the truth," Larry said grimly when he and Pearson came out of the hotel. "Satan kidnapped her, but without a sound."

"That's the way I figure it, too," Pearson agreed. They stood outside the entrance of the hotel. Pearson frowned. "Something I said before has just come back to me," he remarked. "And I don't like the thought of it."

"What is it?"

"Am I Satan?" he asked, awe in his voice.

"What are you talking about?"

"I said the other day that if Arline was kidnapped, one of us would have to be the Satan. We were the only ones who knew she was at this hotel."

"I could ask myself the same question," Larry said. "Am *I* Satan?"

"There's something eerie about this Satan that's beginning to get me," Pearson admitted. "I *know* I'm not Satan, but I can't prove it to you. And you can pin it on me."

"That goes for me, too," Larry admitted. "*I* know I'm not Satan. But how sure of me are you, Earl?"

"I don't know what to say," Pearson replied.

They were just about to enter Pearson's car when a cab pulled up at the curb. The gangling form of Captain Sutton stepped out. He stared at the name of the hotel, nodded to himself and paid the driver. He caught sight of Pearson as he turned toward the entrance.

"Oh, there you are, Pearson," he drawled strolling over to them casually. "I had the deuce of a time tracing you to this place."

"How did you know we were here?" Earl asked, suspiciously.

"Your man Sparks told me. I called up after putting in a call for a duplicate on the cable Bell received. You weren't in and when I asked where you were, Sparks told me at the Eastern Hotel. And here I am. What happened?"

"I'll tell you on the way downtown," Pearson answered. "Hop in. Right now I want to question Sparks."

Briefly, Pearson explained Arline Henderson's kidnapping to Sutton, who kept shaking his head all the way to the Federal Building.

"Deucedly clever that Satan!" he kept exclaiming over and over again. There was a smile on his lips. "I do believe that the information in that cable may solve this case for us."

"Maybe," Pearson agreed. "I hope that the one who should get the credit—Jon Bell—is not dead by then."

Sparks was waiting for them with a pile of afternoon papers when they came into the reception room.

"A few things here that will interest you," he said to Pearson.

"I've got a few things to ask you, Sparks. They may prove to be even more interesting," Pearson snapped back.

"Fire away," Sparks replied cheerfully.

"How did you know I was at the Eastern Hotel?" Pearson shot at the FBI man.

"Why, I heard you say just as you left with Mr. Donald that you were going over to see Arline Henderson," Pearson replied.

"Yes, I remember saying that as I walked by your desk," Pearson admitted. "But I said something about Arline. I don't remember mentioning the Eastern Hotel."

"You didn't," Larry said. "I remember that distinctly."

"You're right," Sparks said. "There was no mention of the Eastern Hotel."

"How did you know, then?"

"Why, Miss Henderson called up here yesterday and I spoke to her."

"You spoke to her?" Pearson asked.

"Sure," Sparks said. "She called up for Larry Donald. I told her he wasn't in and she left a message for him. I wrote it down and left it on your desk. You see, she said it was Arline calling and I knew that it was the Henderson girl from that. While I spoke to her, I had the call traced to the Eastern Hotel. I wrote all that down for you. Didn't you find it on your desk this morning?"

"No," Pearson said.

"Some one must have taken it!" Larry said.

They exchanged amazed looks. Pearson cursed under his breath.

"By jove!" Sutton exclaimed in a low voice, "that blighter manages to be everywhere!"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

FIFTEEN MILLION DOLLARS

PEARSON LED THE WAY THROUGH THE RECEPTION ROOM, NODDING on into the inner office. He threw off his hat and coat and sank wearily into his chair.

"What is it, Sparks?" he asked the Federal man who had followed them in.

The Federal man held a newspaper in his hand. It was an extra edition of the *Tattler*. He tossed it over on the desk.

"Miss Henderson has been kidnapped again," he said. "Satan has snatched her!"

"My God!" Pearson exclaimed. "Henderson lost no time printing the news!"

Pearson was spreading the paper out on his desk. Larry and Sutton drew closer and read over his shoulder. Henderson had broken out his scare head lines.

PUBLISHER'S DAUGHTER KIDNAPPED
COLUMNIST STILL MISSING
FBI INCOMPETENT

Arline Henderson, daughter of the *Tattler* publisher, was kidnapped early this morning, for the second time, by the criminal who calls himself Satan II.

Miss Henderson, who is one of the younger debutantes of New York and Newport, was staying temporarily at the Eastern Hotel when taken.

Jon Bell, the *Tattler's* Broadway reporter, is still missing and it is thought that he has either been kidnapped, or has met with foul play at the hands of this same desperado.

Publisher Henderson lays the blame for the kidnapping of his daughter and Columnist Bell squarely on the shoulders of Earl Pearson, Special Agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. "I have found Pearson," Publisher Henderson said when interviewed, "to be a thoroughly unreliable and incompetent officer. I'm sure that a good police officer would have had the Satan under arrest by this time. I intend to see to it that a full report of his bungling goes straight to the President himself. Pearson has around him a group of amateur detectives, notably Larry Donald, who have no compunctions about risking the lives of innocent people in their search for publicity."

There were several more columns of the same but at that point Pearson shoved the paper from him. "A guy like that," he growled, "can do more harm in ten minutes than we can rectify in a month."

"He also called up," Sparks said. "About thirty minutes ago. He is sending Satan a hundred thousand dollars through you this afternoon. He added that the only reason he was doing it, was because that Satan insisted on it, and hinted rather darkly that he thought you were a partner to the crime."

"Okay, Sparks," Pearson waved the officer away. "I suppose it's only natural, after all. I guess it's a little harder for a man to be fair when his own family is involved in something like

this . . . For heaven's sake sit down. I'm nervous enough without having you pacing the floor like an expectant father!" This last to Larry.

"Okay," Larry said, dropping in a chair. "But let's do something besides warm our chairs."

"Nothing much we can do until we get the directions for the ransom money."

Captain Sutton was watching them both, with an amused expression on his face as though to say, "Oh, you Americans!"

Sparks came back into the room, bearing a letter. "This just came, Special Delivery," he said. He left it on the desk and returned to the outer room.

Pearson slit the envelope and pulled out the sheet of paper. He read it slowly and passed it on to Larry, wordlessly.

It was another letter from the Satan. Larry scanned it quickly.

Dear Pearson:

By the time this reaches you, Mr. Henderson will undoubtedly have been in touch with you. If so, you are aware that Miss Henderson is once more my companion. As a matter of fact I don't need the ransom money at this time but since I feel that your doublecross was more of a personal affront, we'll go through with it. Mrs. Henderson will deliver $100,000 to you early this afternoon. You will take the money, or send one of your men, and go up to Times Square. Buy a ticket for the Arco Theatre and enter. The picture is terrible but I'm sure you won't mind. At exactly 2:15, go into the men's room and enter one of the small cubicles. When you see a man, wearing green suede shoes, with a small white swastika stuck to the suede, enter the booth next to you, shove the money under the partition. Wait fifteen minutes before leaving.

Yes, I have Mr. Bell but he isn't for ransom.

Another little surprise for you, Pearson. This morning the *Empress Eugenie* docked from North Africa, carrying fifteen million dollars in gold. I want that gold. Therefore at 2:30 I shall appear and take it. Due to the amount involved, it will not be necessary for the Universal War Syndicate to indulge in any more petty crimes. We will confine our activities to war secrets.

I shall expect to see you at the pier.

Sincerely yours,
Satan II.

Larry passed it to Sutton who read it and said, almost admiringly, "A cheeky bounder, what!"

"I know damn well," Pearson said, "that no man can walk up and steal fifteen million dollars in gold but damned if he hasn't got me believing he will!"

"But how can he?" exclaimed Larry. "It will take a dozen trucks to cart it away. He can't do it!"

"Well, we won't gamble on it," Pearson said. "We'll make preparations this time that will guarantee he doesn't even get within throwing distance of the ship." He stared thoughtfully at his desk, frowning.

When he raised his head it was to look at Captain Sutton. "Will you do me a favor, Captain?" he asked.

"Oh, quite," the captain said.

"I can't deliver the ransom money and take care of this too," he said. "Since you did so well on the telegram, would you mind delivering the money? You might be able to spot something that will help us trace the man."

"I'll be glad to," the captain said.

"Good. You'll stay here then until time to go. Sparks will sign for the money and turn it over to you. I appreciate this, Sutton."

"Not at all."

"Okay, then. Come on, Larry." The two of them put on their coats and hurried out.

The rest of the morning and early afternoon, to Larry, was a confused hectic rushing.

First there was the police commissioner to see, to arrange for several squads of policemen, armed with riot guns and tear gas bombs. Then a trip to the local Federal Bureau headquarters, and after that to the army post. They found only enough time to grab a sandwich on the run at noon. It was such a busy period that Larry almost forgot to worry about Arline Henderson. Almost, but not quite. And the thing about the intruder that he almost remembered kept tugging at his memory strings.

By a quarter before two, the forces were beginning to assemble at the uptown pier where the French ship lay at anchor.

Traffic was completely shut off the causeway, and the road was given over to speeding police cruisers and army cars.

The pier and the ship swarmed with blue-coated patrolmen carrying their sawed-off riot guns. A squad of army men had set up four machine guns on the prow of the ship. Two more were mounted at the stern. A half dozen army planes circled around overhead. A couple of police cruisers, with machine guns mounted on the prows, idled out in the middle of the river. It looked more like preparations for an air raid than for a threatened robbery.

A minor accident was narrowly averted when a private airplane accidentally strayed near where the ship lay. The army planes converged on it with a swoop. For a moment it looked as though they were going to open fire. Then the startled pilot veered away and fled for his life. The pilots decided he was harmless and circled back over the ship.

Larry and Pearson stood on the main deck of the *Empress Eugenie*. The Commissioner himself stood with them, nervously smoking his cigar. The Commanding General of the Second Corps Area stood by his side, watching his circling planes.

It reminded Larry of the stage setting for some supercolossal Hollywood melodrama. He had a feeling of unreality as though at any moment someone would shout, "Lights! Camera!" This couldn't be America—New York City! One man couldn't be responsible for this turnout of the armed forces of both police and the army. It just wasn't happening. Yet the realization that Arline Henderson was in the clutches of that same fiend, told him that it was true.

He tried not to think of Arline; tried not to imagine what she was going through. That was the trouble with an unknown menace such as the Satan. The fact that he was unknown, made you build up some horrible monster in your mind. A Dracula, with a terrible lust for the blood of young maidens.

He made himself bring his attention back to the milling men. Everyone was on his toes now, looking anxiously in all

directions. It was almost three o'clock. No one talked. The aspect of so many people assembled to quell one man was awe-inspiring, even to the Commissioner and the General, although they would never have admitted it. Pearson was beginning to get nervous, walking up and down the deck with quick uneven strides. Every few seconds he would pull out his watch and glance at it. Once he put it to his ear as though he thought it had stopped. Larry cleared his throat and felt self-conscious at the noise it made. He wondered if Captain Sutton had delivered the ransom.

One of the police officers on the pier shouted for the Commissioner. The latter walked down the gangplank and entered the little office. A moment later he hurried out and came puffing back up the gangplank. His face was red as he faced Pearson.

"I'm afraid there has been a mistake," he said. "And this time it is one you can't blame on the police department, Mr. Pearson."

"What are you talking about?" Pearson snapped.

"While we were waiting for the Satan to show up here, he robbed the Midtown Federal Trust. Three employees and the cop on the beat were killed."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SATAN UNMASKED

"COME ON!" PEARSON SNAPPED TO LARRY, WITHOUT WAITING TO hear more. The two men raced down the gangplank and hurried into their car. Pearson stamped the starter and the motor roared into life. The car was doing fifty in second gear, with the siren screaming, when Pearson shifted into high and swung into the ramp.

Across town they raced, through red lights, missing cars by fractions of inches, around corners on two wheels. Pearson's

mouth was a bloodless line in his face. Finally they pulled up in front of the Midtown bank with screeching brakes. Larry followed him in.

Showing his gold badge, Pearson shoved his way past the mob of cops inside and made his way to the president, a florid-faced individual who looked ready to break down and weep any minute. Pearson flashed his badge again.

"What happened?" he asked curtly.

"Well," the president began, wringing his hands, "we were expecting a special delivery, so when an armored car drew up in front and the guards came in we were unalarmed. There were six of them which was unusual, but we still didn't think anything was wrong. The first warning we had was when they turned their guns on us.

"Two of our tellers tried to turn in an alarm and were cold-bloodedly murdered. The policeman on the beat came running in and was shot down. They proceeded very leisurely to empty the vaults.

"It will be days before we can tell definitely how much money is missing but a rough estimate, I should say, would be in the neighborhood of five million dollars. A large percentage of this was in currency, part of it in negotiable bonds and securities."

"Any description of the men?" Pearson asked.

"Yeah," the homicide cop nearby answered, "so far we've got eight different descriptions of each guy and there's a couple of people we ain't asked yet."

"Like that, eh?"

"Yeah."

At that moment Larry was just coming out of the next office where he had been telephoning. His face was flushed with excitement as he came up to Pearson.

"I've remembered a few things that I think may lead to the answer," he exclaimed. "I know it's irritating but will you make a phone call and find out something for me without asking any questions yet? It may mean capturing the Satan."

Pearson looked at Larry for a long minute before answering. "It is a little strange," he said, "but I'll take a chance with you, Larry. God knows I'm willing to do anything that will stop this guy before he kills more people. What is it you want?"

"Can you find out who has rented property on Bethune Street, down in the village, during the past month or so. Either a house or a very large apartment. It will probably be a house. There's a phone in that office."

"I'll see," Pearson said. He turned on his heel and entered the office with quick strides.

Larry fidgeted around, watching the homicide men at work. Several of them were still questioning some of the employees; a photographer was shooting off flashes, taking different angles of the corpses; a fingerprint man was bent over the door of the vault. Outside, he could see a small crowd held back by several patrolmen. He shifted his feet and hoped Pearson would hurry up—and that his hunch was right. It was not much more than a hunch at that, even the part he had remembered from the night before.

Pearson came out of the office, a scrap of paper in his hand.

"Not much of a choice for you," he said. "There were only two rentals on that street during the past two months. One was a two-room apartment, the other an eight-room house."

"Who rented the house?"

"A Dr. Bertram Ames, who is using the house for a private sanitarium."

"That's it," Larry said, adding under his breath, "it's got to be!"

"What now? Want to tell me?"

"Not yet," Larry said evasively. "Besides there's no time. Come on. If you can make that car go faster than you did coming over here, do it."

"Okay," Pearson said. His quick strides led the way out to the government car. Once more they were under way, with the screaming siren clearing the cars from in front of them like geese scattering before a dog.

With all his anxiety concerning Arline, and dread lest he was making a mistake, he found time to wonder if he'd ever again be able to loaf along at a mere forty or fifty miles an hour. There was something intoxicating about sweeping along with a siren that so magically cleared the way.

The siren thinned to a hum and died out as the car turned off Hudson into Bethune Street. Pearson drove slowly until he spotted the number he was looking for. He let the car slide a couple of doors beyond before he brought it to a silent stop. They looked back at the house. It was an old-fashioned building, badly in need of paint. Old window blinds were half drawn, making it look like a sleepy-eyed mammoth.

The two men approached the front of the house carefully. Larry's heart was thudding against his ribs. Suppose he had made a mistake? Suppose this really was a sanitarium and Dr. Ames was a licensed medico? He couldn't even think of it.

Nothing happened as they slipped up the front steps. Pearson tried the door. It gave under his pressure; swung open silently. For a moment the two of them stood in the doorway, listening. They could hear the faint murmur of a voice somewhere in the house, droning on and on.

"I think it's in the basement," Larry whispered.

"Sounds like it," Pearson answered. "Come on."

The two of them slipped silently into the house and found the door leading to the basement. Pearson inched it open carefully and they started down the steps. Pearson tested each step for possible creaks before he stepped on it. Finally they reached the bottom of the steps. The basement was in complete darkness. Larry kept one hand on Pearson's shoulder. Off to the left a light gleamed from a half-open door. It was there the droning voice was emanating. They drew closer.

". . . so, much as I regret to, I shall have to cut both of your throats including even *your* pretty throat, Miss Henderson. It's too bad you can't see things my way instead of mooning over that young writer You would make a fit mate for Satan. But since you won't, and both have seen my face, you

must die. Even as Fritz over there and as did my five other associates upstairs.

"It is regrettable, yes. But you see, I didn't expect to get as much as five million from the bank today. That alters things. Instead of going on with my plans for stealing war secrets, I can retire somewhere and live as Satan should.

"Now, to get on with our work. I think I will take you first, Miss Henderson. It's my sensitive nature. I hate to think of you fainting as the blood spurts from the throat of your companion. Now, if you will tilt your head a little—"

Both Larry and Pearson hit the door together. The door swung open and they catapulted into the room. Jon Bell and Arline Henderson were lying on the floor, bound and gagged. A figure was bending over the girl, a bright knife in his hand. At the sound of the two men bounding into the room he straightened and swung around. It was Captain Sutton!

Even though he was expecting it, Larry was taken aback. The captain's face was twisted in a snarl of rage. Pearson was even more surprised; so much so that his hand faltered on its way to his holster. That almost cost him his life.

The knife clattered to the floor and the captain's hand darted under lapel, reappearing with the Webley.

As he shot, Arline Henderson kicked with her bound feet, hitting Sutton a glancing blow on the ankle. It was a slight blow but it was enough to throw his shot off a little. The bullet caught Pearson in the left shoulder, high up, spinning him around and slamming him against the open door.

Before Sutton could fire again, Larry was on him. This time he saw to it that the captain had no chance to wrap those arms around him. One hand grabbed the wrist of the hand that held the gun, his other hand dug into Sutton's throat. This time it was the captain who gave ground until he was backed up against the small radio sending set.

For a moment the two of them were poised there, motionless, their eyes staring into each other, their muscles straining. Slowly, the captain bent backward. Slowly the hand holding

the gun was forced back until the muzzle was pressing against Sutton's own body. It was then that the captain gave way. The strain on his twisted wrist was too much; he pulled the trigger of the Webley. His body slumped against the sending set, and slid to the floor in an attitude of supplication at the feet of the dead operator, propped up in his chair.

Larry, gasping for breath, hurried to the girl on the floor and tore at her bonds. As he took the gag from her mouth, she sobbed, "Oh, darling, I knew you would come."

He kissed her quickly on the forehead, and said, "See if you can get Bell loose." He crossed the room to Pearson, who was leaning against the steps, clutching his shoulder, his face pale.

"I'm all right," Pearson said. "It's mostly shock. I think I've got the blood stopped with my handkerchief." He let Larry lead him across the room.

Arline quickly tore strips of cloth from her underskirt and began binding Pearson's shoulder, while Larry finished untying Bell.

"Thanks," Bell said, rubbing his wrists, "you almost didn't make that deadline, kid. How did you get wise?"

"That's what I want to know," Pearson said, peering around Arline. "What the hell gave you the idea?"

"Well," Larry said slowly, "it was a series of things each of which singly meant nothing. To begin with, though, Captain Sutton had the type of personality that fitted the Satan. He didn't show it often, but he *was* as egotistical as hell. Then he was never around when any of the important things happened.

"You remember, I told you about Lane picking something up from the ground the day of the bank robbery? Well, just before that he had been examining the window where Sutton had been standing. Then when he found something on the ground, I saw him looking at Captain Sutton. But I didn't think anything of it at the time.

"But the thing that really made me tie them all together was when he broke into the Henderson house last night. Remember I said there was something familiar? It was when the

man cursed. He used the same nasal intonation with which Sutton talked. But that didn't come back to me until we were at the bank a few minutes ago. Another thing, he was the only one who could have picked my pocket that first day.

"It had to be someone who had a chance to overhear all the plans you made. So that meant one of us. I knew it wasn't me and I was pretty sure it wasn't you. That left only Bell and Sutton. For a while I wasn't sure about Bell but when he too was kidnapped that left only Sutton.

"Another thing I remember was that first day, when Sutton said he was going to his hotel, he ordered the cab to *Bethune Street* down in Greenwich Village. I didn't think anything of it at the time, nor even later when I learned his hotel was uptown. But I did when I started to connect these other things. I—I guess that's all."

"Good reasoning," Pearson said weakly. "How about you, Bell? You must have been on his trail too or he wouldn't have grabbed you."

"I was," Bell said. "Remember my mentioning Stanley Porter, the Dark Prince? Well, he kept running through my mind. It was about five years ago. So I got in touch with our London correspondent and asked him to check up on Sutton and also see if he could learn anything about Porter.

"He could and did. He found traces of Porter landing there and then disappearing. On the other hand, he could learn nothing about Sutton prior to the disappearance of Porter. And they were similar in appearance. Also our London man reported that there were rumors that Captain Sutton got into the Intelligence Service and got the American assignment through a little polite blackmail. I was on my way to your office with that information when I was picked up by a couple of his gunmen and brought here.

"I can also clear up the mystery about what Lane picked up under the window. When Sutton went out to check up on the bank guards he took a fine wire, strung up the day before, across the street. It was attached to a small portable receiving

set. The edge of the wire was stuck through the window upstairs and when he took up his position again, he fastened a small microphone to it. That way, if anything happened to threaten his men, he could let them know without the men in the room being any the wiser. When the wire jerked loose, a piece broke off. That's what Lane found.

"The Nazi he turned up was one of his men. He sacrificed him to make an impression. The poor German was going to fight us. He was going to use his Lüger to commit suicide—as he had been instructed. But Sutton killed him."

"What about the man in the Grand Central Station?" Pearson asked.

"That was Sutton, wearing a coat that was padded to make him look heavy-set."

"Well, thank God, he's dead," Pearson said. "Where's the money?"

"It's all right here," Bell said, pointing to two suitcases beside where he had lain. "There's also a list of everyone that worked with him although he claimed that he had killed them."

"Look!" screamed the girl. The three men whirled and looked toward the wireless set. Captain Sutton was gone. A trail of blood led through the door toward the stairs.

"Then he wasn't dead!" Larry exclaimed. He and Bell dashed out of the basement and up the stairs, with Pearson and the girl following more slowly. The trail of blood led up the stairs and out the front door.

The two men were out on the sidewalk before they realized that the government car was gone from the curb.

"The damned fool couldn't even forget his pride while almost dead," Bell said. "Look!"

On the sidewalk, traced crudely in blood was the inscription, "Satan II."

They went back and with Pearson began gathering up the evidence and the money, while Arline called an ambulance for Pearson.

"He can't possibly get far," Pearson insisted, referring to Sutton.

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Several weeks later, the column "Broadway by Jon Bell" in the New York *Tattler* carried the following items: "Larry Donald, the novelist, and Arline Henderson, my boss's daughter, will middle-aisle it within a few weeks . . . Aside to Special Agent Pearson, convalescing in the hospital: Check on the rumor that our friend S. II was picked up at sea by a submarine. If so, he will land in Berlin just in time to be taken prisoner by the American forces.

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